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**The
VENTURE BOOK.**

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TWO YOUNG TAHITIAN GIRLS

The VENTURE BOOK

BY
ELINOR MORDAUNT

ILLUSTRATED WITH SKETCHES
AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY
THE AUTHOR

Sa laka evei



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INTRODUCTION

People ask me whether I travel for pleasure or profit, but I am unable to say. I should make a great deal more money if I stayed at home, in Pimlico or Putney, writing books about the Pacific: about places I have never seen; about the people I should hate to meet. But I do not desire only to make money, though I desire that passionately enough at times, times when I feel like a poor relation. If I must work to live,—and thank God for the necessity!—a thousand thousand times more must I live to work. In addition to this I am terribly afraid of being hustled off to another world before I have had time to find the one perfect spot in this. And is there not always, always the something more! Perhaps this is why I find myself unable to rest. There are people who go to the same English seaside resort every summer of their lives, and they are—well, that sort of people. And very nice, truly sane people, too. Or is it only that their madness lies in some altogether different direction?

For myself, I am always thinking, "There is something better: other places, other people."

Boredom drives me; the dust and ashes of the easily obtainable drive me; strangeness draws me like a master hand on my heartstrings.

And yet I do not know why. I am happy in a house of my own, or a single room of my own. I love my books, my own household gods. But there is something else, another self—and I would give much to know how many other people are charmed and tortured by this other self—which is like a bird deep within me; deep in some dark and tropical forest, among trees so high that no wind touches it; nesting quiet beneath the leaves until something or some one whistles it away out of its wood. I am drawn by some instinct akin to that which sets the swallow, while suns are yet warm in England, longing beyond all denial for Africa—that glare and glamour and heartbreak which is Africa. Drawn like a lark from its happy nest in the grass, aspiring to the skies.

One is not really happy traveling, one is most happy in remembering. It is, indeed, like hanging one's memory with a magic web in which one must have done all one's own weaving, with much hard work, with weariness and many denials. A web of gold and drab and black and opal tints; a

web like the canopy of the Milky Way, with dark patches toward which one never once looks back. For altogether safe and comfortable traveling, in which one is surrounded by everything to which one is accustomed—and how many people ask, “Was it comfortable?” and not “Was it wonderful?”—is nothing to be accounted of.

To live wonderfully, to live adventurously, to live by the skin of one's teeth. It would be an ill world if every one were like this, but I cannot help myself, that's how I am. And, though it is altogether as a shifting magic web that I look back upon my adventure, I feel it best to leave the greater part of it in this book just as I wrote it, sitting in boats or canoes, standing in crowded streets or market-places, in a native hut or at the door of my tent, as much in the moment and upon the spot as though I were drawing actual portraits of places, of people, and of my own impression of them.

The real loss in writing about such a venture lies in the fact that the scenes, at first so strange, the people, the material of life itself, one's altogether changed method of meeting it, become in so short a time a commonplace, that one forgets that there are still many people to whom it is all glamour or altogether unknown.

A ship so quickly becomes a home, with all the queer little ups and downs of home life, an endless succession of strange ports no more wonderful than a succession of strange streets less than a mile away from one's own doorstep, that, far from exaggerating, it is with difficulty that one can jerk one's memory back to the wonder of the first keen impression: the effect upon one of the first flight of flying-fish, like fine elfin silver simitars of the sea, the first fringe of palms upon a white strand. It is hard to realize that there are many thousands who have never seen a Portuguese man-of-war, or nautilus, with all its tiny orchid-like sails set, indomitably sailing a momentary tranquil, perfectly blue, and yet to it—no larger in all its pride and panoply than half a thumb's length—unending ocean. Only by an effort does one remember that there are still, even in these days, many who have not so much as edged upon the unexplored desert of the Sargasso Sea; been in the company of a man who has dined upon his fellows, with relish and without self-consciousness; consorted with widows who regard it as no more than a commonplace decency of mourning to blacken themselves from head to foot, wear an assortment of their husbands' bones slung about their necks, so that the fact of any one of them choosing to pose for

her photograph with the dear departed's skull clasped in both hands upon her knee seems no whit more peculiar than that English beauties should be pictured showing every tooth—which is, after all, no more than a sort of bone, made to be decently covered by the lips—in an unending and unvarying smirk.

But, then, what an amazing thing is this affair of modes and morals. One's own quick readaptation. Upon the Trobriand Islands, for instance,—where for some happy and never-to-be-forgotten weeks I reigned as king,—it was regarded as in some ways a want of delicacy to allow worms to devour your dead relatives when you might so well, and with profit, perform that last office for yourself; whereas in Fiji, even in the fiercest days of cannibalism, it was looked upon as the worst sort of form to dish up your own relative, even an in-law. Again, to show the difficulty there is in preserving any kind of fixed standard, we have that curious custom of the people in the Marquesas Islands in which, far from virginity being counted as a virtue, the bride gains in value, in consideration, by the number of men of her own village with whom she has consorted upon the night before her marriage; while one can imagine no more vile crime in the eyes of any truly

moral Marquesan than the denial involved in taking the veil.

Is it strange, then, that among all these changes one finds oneself doing quite naturally things which one never could, at home in England, have imagined oneself as doing? Though there is still the liability of a sudden, sweeping wonder as to how you come to be where you are, or if it is, indeed, you yourself; a longing for the little dog of the nursery rhyme to prove to you your own identity:

If this be I, as I should hope it be,
I've a little dog at home and he'll know me.

And it could but end in one way:

Home went the little woman all in the dark,
Up jumped the little dog and he began to bark.

I remember well at one odd little hotel where I was stranded, waiting for a boat—a place frequented by gold-diggers, searchers after osmium-iridium and oil, missionaries, pearl-buyers, and people who purchased ancient vessels for no other reason than to insure and wreck them—getting so tired of the sound of a violent and noisy quarrel, which went on late into the night in a neighboring room, sounds which at home in England would

have scared and shocked me, that, rising in my wrath, slipping into a dressing-gown, I went off to find out what could be done to stop it.

I can see that scene now. It was a very small room, full of men in pajamas or trousers and singlets,—the latter so torn open that they did not count,—beer bottles and glasses; how the most enraged of them found space to fling up and down it, I don't know, but he did, while I myself was drawn by the eddy to a seat on the bed between two other men.

The dispute was upon an affair which really did touch the striding man's honor, but still there was no necessity to make such a bellow about it. When I pointed this out, said that if they would all stop talking at once I might get at something of the truth, far from telling me to go back to my own room, mind my own business, they all turned to me, appealed to me, with a: "Look here, you're a woman of the world, and you know . . . He said . . ." and "He said . . ." and "He said . . ."

In their eagerness the men beside me caught my arms and tugged until I got to my feet and, snatching the aggrieved one by the sleeve, entreated him to cease making an ass of himself.

It was all settled at last by my promise to go

out at seven next morning, the moment the wireless office was open, and myself, at my own expense, send off a message with a prepaid answer which would clench the matter once for all. And I remember how it ended too—what I said:

“And now stop making a nuisance of yourself, and get off to bed, for the Lord’s sake!”

That was one of the occasions when, returning to my own room, I found myself wondering if this was, indeed, I.

And again, though a very different setting, this: The dense black-velvet mask of a moonless and starless tropical night; one of those nights when you hear the swish of the palms above your head, the sea at your feet, and see nothing, not so much as the ghost of a crested wave, the tremor of a pale-gray stem; when the very fireflies seem abashed into darkness by the immensity of unilluminated space. At such a time was I carried on shore upon a strange island, having put off in a dinghy from a cutter, wind-driven with a force which separated us as entirely from civilization as though the main and altogether sophisticated island of the group were the width of the Atlantic away; borne in the arms of a gigantic native through the water to the shore and deposited there, with the sound, the gentle stir, of a multitude of

strange, totally unseen people all around me. My pack, with a few personal belongings which might have helped me to prove my own identity to myself, with the help of Cash's woven names,—though Heaven knows that names which nobody can read or pronounce, giving no indication of tribe or "pigeon," mean little enough to anybody once you are off the beaten path and there is nobody to bolster up your dignity by taking it for granted that you are one of the so-and-so's of so-and-so,—was awash in a very insecurely anchored boat, the best part of a quarter of a mile out to sea.

But here I am forestalling myself, for this is a tale to be told in its proper place and at its proper time, more especially recorded because it was the only time when I ever felt really and truly frightened. Not that this is any boast or proof of courage, but rather that, sliding eastward by the West as I did, everything seemed in its own time and place to be so inevitable, and so altogether as it should be.

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THE VENTURE BOOK

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CHAPTER I

PEOPLE use Marseilles as a jumping-off place; but to me it is an enchantment, a hot-pot of strangeness and beauty and villainies. The door of the East; the East itself done out, not in the hot colors of oil paint, but in pastels of infinite softness, hinting and beckoning, smiling, leering, threatening, enchanting.

The little streets run like outstretched fingers from the palm of the main streets, clutching the world, with every nationality and every tongue dripping through them; narrow streets with high white and cream-colored buildings on each side and green and blue outside shutters; incredibly narrow alleys with bister-colored houses, and rags of washing fluttering across them; but at the end of each the beauty of the hills or the sea, the harbor with its crowded shipping, its forests of masts and funnels, its quays with men of every shade and color thick upon them, the romances and hor-

rors of a whole world written upon their faces.

Everywhere there are plane-trees; bare now, with a delicate lace-like web of twigs against a sky which has been an unclouded soft blue, that same pastel-like blue, throughout the three days which have passed since I came rushing down to the South, clear away without a break from the London fogs, to catch my boat, which is late in arriving from Bordeaux.

The fishermen's church, La Dame de la Garde, stands high upon its rocky jag of mountain. I can see it from my bedroom window at the Hotel Terminus, set like the crowning point of a tiara, at the end of half the aspiring streets of Marseilles; most lovely in the evening when the sky is the color of the skies in very old Chinese prints.

At that time the streets are crowded with promenaders, as are the cafés which debouch upon them every few yards, crowded with, for the most part, staid revelers: little families; husbands and wives; young men with their sweethearts; groups of young men; groups of business men—all eating and drinking, moderately enough and yet with a relish, a delight, which is strange to us.

It seems to me, indeed, like a series of fête-days coming one on top of another, those days when one laughs at nothing in particular, drinks the

health of every one, and no one in particular. But in reality it is nothing of the sort; it goes on just the same from day to day. It is the everyday life of the South, the sort of life which, whatever it may be, is most emphatically not English; infinitely far removed from the drinking of beer in frowzy bars, noisy men, furtive or bold-faced women in men's caps, babies in prams upon the pavement outside.

The whole of the front of one large draper's shop—displaying wax ladies of an almost incredible loveliness, standing tiptoe in wages-of-sin sort of undergarments—is aglow with an innumerable number of rose-pink electric lights. In front of this shop, and bathed in the pink lights, are flower-stalls piled high with narcissi, carnations, mimosa, hyacinths, and violets.

Fresh from the hands of the hairdresser at the Hotel Terminus, I sit on the open veranda of one of the cafés and sip my coffee. The dressing of my hair was in itself a prelude to adventure, a sort of sloughing off of the skin of everyday life. My request was for a simple and inexpensive shampoo, and that was all I was charged for. But the artist, an artist with a soul, plump as a rather overgrown Cupid, with large ox eyes, a brosse of dark hair, deprecating and persuasive hands,—an

artist with, evidently enough, an eye for antiques, —was totally unable to leave it at that.

After washing my hair he tied up my head tight in a white towel, so that I looked like a *religieuse*, and massaged me, first with cream that smelt of lavender, then with three different sorts of powder. . He was very short and fat, and I am very tall and thin. When he had almost finished he made me stand up and tilted my face this way and that, as though it had been nothing human, to get the light upon it at every angle. Never in my life have I seen any one so completely absorbed. As I was obliged to stoop, the whole effect, repeated in the manifold mirrors around the room, was odd beyond words; but like all true artists, this one was completely lacking in the faintest sense of humor.

His last touch was the most wonderful of all; for with some scented liquid on the tip of his forefinger he swept up the eyelashes on the upper lid of each eye and left them curling. Heavens above! and to think that I am now a middle-aged woman and never before have I had curling eyelashes; never before have I realized that my eyelashes were capable of curling. So many, many things come to one altogether too late in life.

A man with a wooden leg is sitting under the trees beneath my window at the hotel. It makes no pretense of being anything but a wooden leg, for there is a stump at the end of it, faintly Pan-like—so easy to notch into a hoof! But this very dapper gentleman has not done that; instead, he has padded it where the ankle should be, and wears the upper part of a very neat—oh, but very neat!—patent-leather boot to match the one upon his other foot, the eyelets rimmed with white and laced with white silk ties.

To-night I dined with a man I met in London, who is also awaiting his boat, at Le Grand Restaurant Basso, famous for its bouillabaisse. I lived too dreadfully long and intimately at one time of my life with people who guzzled bouillabaisse as nothing else on earth can be sucked and gobbled, to go there for that; but there were many other things at Basso's. I went, indeed, for the company and the delight of dining in the upper room with its glazed veranda, so like the upper deck of a ship, giving straight on to the lights of the harbor. The dinner, minus bouillabaisse, was beyond criticism and very carefully thought out: *Soupe de Petit Marmite*; a mixture of shellfish cooked

with creamy white sauce in large flat shells and deliciously named *Coquille de Fruit de Mer*; pigeons; *petit pois*; *Pêche Melba* banked round with chopped ice, and coffee—such coffee, redolent of all the perfumes of Araby! A dinner which rounded off to perfection my three days in Marseilles.

CHAPTER II

TO-DAY, the day of my first embarkation, dawned gray and very chilly; all the magic for the time being gone from out Marseilles, be-draggled drab of a drunken sailor.

I gave myself an hour to get to my ship, ten minutes' drive at most. But I had forgotten: cargo-boats are things apart, "nothing accounted of" in Marseilles; and though the porter at the hotel and the taxi-driver assured me that they knew exactly where mine started from, they knew nothing whatever about it, while I myself had been perfectly casual.

Quays, quays, quays! Search for an inconsiderable French cargo-boat among the quays of Marseilles and the whole world seems to be overrun with them, thick as a spider's web. For what seemed like an eternity we rushed up and down quays in clouds of dust; threaded tangles of quays; lost them altogether; were caught in the hem of the town, tore ourselves loose and raced shrieking from it; got back to our quays and were

no better off; drew up innumerable times to make innumerable inquiries of wildly excited and gesticulating men, who knew all about everything; were held back by innumerable open bridges while the ships of the entire world, or so it seemed, trailed their way with a calculated and malicious slowness between the draws. And all the time bells rang, whistles shrilled; steam-sirens pierced the air with screams, every one of which I took to be the signal for the departure of my own special ship, while I myself stood up in the taxi exhorting the driver, in execrable French, to pull himself together.

The ship, *El Kantara*, was to sail at ten o'clock and the representative of the Messageries Maritimes Company, to whom she belongs, was to be there at half-past nine to introduce me to the captain. It was, however, precisely three minutes to ten when we at last sighted her, and hurtling the length of the last quay, the taxi making such sounds as though it were the only taxi in the world, I scrambled out of it and on board, finding the agent, exquisitely polite—and still polite!—waiting for me with the captain by his side. A shortish, stoutly built man, this captain whom I was to find so good a comrade, with a short, bright-brown beard, merry bright-brown eyes,

and a bright color; a man in whom every line and every tint, every movement spoke of a life at sea.

There are some twenty first-class passengers on board,—one Englishman and the remainder French,—with a few more in the second class. But they do not really count, so entirely is the ship built and fitted for cargo. The alleyways past the cabins and beneath the central deck are flush and open, with the crew passing to and fro unchecked; while all decks are free to me.

The lower decks are crowded with live stock: cocks and hens, loudly quacking ducks, and geese; sheep in pens, and large, mild dun-colored oxen. There are soldiers being carried out to New Caledonia, with no one apart from a petty officer over them. The crew are of all nationalities and colors; in the evening long trestle tables, decently laid, are set out on deck for their dinner, which begins with soup, goes on to other courses just as ours does, and ends with black coffee and cigarettes, while bottles of wine stand all along its length. As I look over the rail of the upper deck on this first evening more than one man raises his glass to me, for they all seem entirely friendly. There is a continual flow of talk and laughter and loud argument, but they do not seem to grumble, and I do believe that other nations vent that spleen

which embitters ours by loud shouting and excited gestures leading to nothing whatever.

On going down to my cabin to wash my hands for dinner I find it lighted by two candles, for the electric light is out of gear. So steady is the boat, so smooth the sea, that they stand upright without so much as a dab of wax to fix them, reminding me of a Spanish hotel in Tetuan at which I was staying last year.

In this hotel, where there was rather fine imitation Jacobean furniture, I noticed that all the tables and flat arms of the chairs were covered with tallow, the reason for which was shown to me that evening when the electric light gave out and the incredibly shabby little waiter, wearing a dress suit which was an epic in descent, coming round with a handful of candles, poured yet more wax upon every convenient spot and dabbed a lighted candle down upon it. That was a hotel which—proudly advertising fitted basins and hot and cold water in every room, with bath-rooms—used the baths as dust-bins, while there was nothing beyond the mere basin in any room; no plumbing of any sort; a bucket beneath to catch the water when one pulled out the cork, and a battered enamel jug standing by its side.

The boat is thick with the grime of ports, her

decks foul with the trampling of many feet; while the aft decks are packed high with those iron rods which—sent aboard her at the last moment at Bordeaux—necessitated the shifting of much cargo to balance her, the re-rating of the chronometers which so much iron threw out of gear, thus accounting for her late arrival at Marseilles. For a ship is like a woman in love: it takes very little to upset her when there is nothing serious in hand.

El Kantara is by far the steadiest boat I have ever been on, pursuing her somewhat slow way with such placidity that whenever I think of her I think of a motherly brown hen brooding over her young. To-day, however, the third day out, she took a sea—or rather the sea took her—most uncivilly, right across her starboard bows.

I was still in my bunk when a steward came running to tell me that I must not go on deck, while the saloon, very far forward, was so full of water that I could n't go there, either. At this I remembered the bridge, which the captain had made free to me. Dressing hurriedly, I made my way up there, and stood, holding to the rail, torn by the wind, the rain running in torrents from off my oilskin; while then only, for the first time, the full delight of the sea got me, the weariness of land was sloughed away from me.

We have already passed Gibraltar. The coast of Morocco is dim in the rain at one side of us, Spain less than two miles away upon the other. There are steamers upon each side, pitching too terribly, but all this while we are steady; at least quite steady enough.

The name of the colored steward who waits upon me is Chocolat; he has a very great deal of gold set round his white teeth, reminding me of Solomon's throne, all gold and ivory. I like that. I like the fact, also, that despite the passengers whom I had not expected and who at first rather appalled me, this is, indeed, a cargo-boat where one need not spend one's time feverishly dragging out boxes from under one's bunk, dressing and undressing, sitting with one's hair in curlers, or clamoring at the hairdresser's door.

We pass Madeira at night. There must be some festival in progress at Funchal, for the town glitters with lights; the hillside is looped with them, but little less remote than the stars. More remote, indeed, when I come to think of it, for the stars are our friends, our guides, while the ephemeral lights of land are left behind us, forgotten for a month at least. The weather grows warmer each day, the sun gains in power, and

with the salt and wind and sun comes that delicious languor of the sea, so that one can sleep in a moment and wake in a moment. For hours upon end the soldiers play at dominoes and draughts and cards, with other odd games which I have not yet mastered, upon the lower decks; while the members of the crew who are not on duty lounge about and watch them or take a hand.

The warmest place on board is on the long narrow slit of upper deck in front of the saloon, and here I love to lean over the flat woodwork of the rail and watch the life going on beneath me, feel the sun upon my back.

To-day, during the first half of the dog-watch, there was a thick ring of backers around two men who were boxing: a tall negro, thin, weak-looking, and hollow-cheeked, who reminded me of the nigger of the *Narcissus*, and a small, strongly built Frenchman, with bright black eyes, hard red cheeks, and a waxed mustache, quivering with life and energy. At the first go-off the negro seemed half asleep; his chin appeared to loll forward on his breast; he moved his muffled hands vaguely, almost as though he were massaging his own person as certain insects do, swaying gently from side to side; while the Frenchman danced around him on the tips of his toes, nimble as a cat, with

swift lightning punches up at his antagonist's face.

I had no idea how the negro defended himself. To my mind he just lolloped from side to side; but somehow or other he did it, while all the other man's clean and, as it seemed, beautifully timed blows slid aside from him.

Quite suddenly, so suddenly that I heard myself cry out, the negro woke to life. That sort of gray pallor which comes over colored people when they are wearied or bored passed away. It is certain that he grew blacker, black and shiny; with a fierce left-hander he got the Frenchman on the jaw just as he was stepping back, and over the little man went; but he was up in a moment and at it again like a spirited cock-sparrow, bent beneath a perfect hurricane of two-handed blows. His eyes, bright and scared, full of astonishment, ran to and fro, putting him completely at the mercy of the negro, whose somnolent gaze never for a single moment left the other's face, while, though drops of sweat sprayed out from him in the sunshine, he was still entirely unexhausted.

The fight was interesting, but more interesting still were the spectators. A lank blackguard in a red-and-white striped singlet, with but one tooth in his head and that in the very center of the top

jaw, long and yellow, kept on throwing flirtatious glances up at the poop where I stood leaning over the rail, as if to say, "All this is done to please you." An apache with inordinately long hair plastered back from his forehead, who was painting stanchions with red lead, seemed to be hung upon a string between his interest in the match and his work, to which he was jerked back by the ferocious stare of the *maître d'équipage*, who was walking to and fro by me, jerking his chin in my direction, as if to say: "Did you ever see the like of that!" An efficient person with a commanding presence, large and heavily built, florid and bearded and fierce; so challenging that at first when I spoke to him I thought he intended to be insolent. I found later on that his manner, curt, independent, and fierce, was precisely the same with the captain as with me; that he was in reality full of kindness, though intolerant of idlers. He had been on the ship for nineteen years—ever since she was built, indeed, save for one short break.

Throughout the evenings the lower decks, both fore and aft, are like scenes in old Dutch pictures. Then one hears the thin, piercing note of mandolin and zither, while men of every shade of color, from the fair-haired Norman soldier to the full-blooded negro,—though there are more of the warm

chocolate-brown of the Malagash than any other,—sprawl under the great lamps which hang beneath the awnings, casting all their light downward in an umber-tinted glow upon the sleepers, the loungers, the musicians, and the gamblers. These last are now, for the most part, possessed by a passion for a game of which I have not yet mastered the name, played with small, round counters upon little boards showing numbered squares; the man who holds the bank shaking a bag unceasingly, picking out numbered counters at random, shouting out the numbers in a loud monotone which seems to go on throughout the entire night.

The negro who is now the acknowledged champion boxer of the *Kantara*, and is to fight another ship's champion in Martinique, sits motionless hour after hour, meditatively caressing his vast and shining biceps, while every little Jack Sparrow among the crew spars at him jocularly, in passing, and the stowaway—an elderly man with a rascally empurpled face and incredibly incongruous collection of garments—earns his tucker and tobacco, all the scraps thrown to him, by a perpetual and ornate stream of blasphemous humor. I myself am liable to fine and imprisonment when we reach Pointe-à-Pitre, for tossing him occasional packets

of rank French cigarettes which I purchase from the *maître d'équipage*, for, after all, he is a merry rascal and little more coarse, I suspect, than an aforetime king's jester.

When night has once really fallen, men strew the deck in every direction. An hour ago, pacing a narrow slip which edges the saloon, I as nearly as possible stepped upon a sleeper stretched out upon bare boards; I drew back my foot just in time, warned by nothing more than the sudden realization of two curving rows of white teeth in an invisible face immediately beneath it.

The moon is four days old. At six o'clock this evening it was half-way up the sky, lying upon its back in a perfect crescent, with the fiery sun dipping to the sea beneath it, and Venus, diamond clear, immediately above. The sea was a deep peacock blue, every small ripple tipped with gold. As the sun set, all was clear indigo, sea and sky alike, the moon and that one lovely planet a shining gold, such as could scarcely be imagined in more temperate climes. The sight of it is well worth an eighteen-days' voyage, even if we were only to turn and go back the way we have come.

Every evening I go up to the fore peak and watch the sunset with all that magnificent panoply

of purple, silver, and gold clouds which are part of the pageant of the trades.

The time is infinitely long and yet short. It seems as though I could never have been anywhere else than upon this ship; that Marseilles, indeed, is farther away than my childhood. And yet each individual day slides by like light, though I am up on deck at seven, having my coffee in my dressing-gown, while the captain walks the deck with quick, short steps. He paces thus for hour upon hour each day, wheeling back every now and then—for he never thinks of it until he is past me—to recount some ridiculous, amorous, or dangerous adventure; such adventures as would make a whole book in themselves.

I see very little of the other passengers. All the morning I work in the captain's own little saloon, high up on the bridge, and in the afternoon every one else is asleep. For the time being, however, there is nothing on earth that I desire so little as human companionship; while the voyage is so uneventful, so quiet, that the days stream out behind me like a long, indefinitely shaded, blue-and-gray scarf.

What is real is that I am writing short stories to finish a series, of which I left the first part at

home; that the food is good, and there is good red wine served at every meal; that the captain is a good comrade when I want one, brave and honest, the other officers pleasant and friendly, the bridge quiet and infinitely restful.

It is an occasion when we all get into white clothes,—the first epoch-making event, indeed,—and it means a lot. One feels cleaner, fresher, and saner with the sun and the air upon one's skin, stretching oneself in it, breathing it all in; lazier also, for more and more often the captain and his officers lounge at the open door talking to me, while more and more often I put down my pen and go out upon the open bridge, to look at—what?—the sea and the sky.

There are twenty cats on board, but only one has the run of the bridge; she sees to this for herself. Every morning, when the steward brings the captain a cup of coffee, the cat brings the captain a dead rat, fruit of a night's hunting, and lays it upon the deck beside his bunk.

Up to now she has spent the entire day sleeping in an arm-chair, save when, arching her back, stretching and yawning, she aroused herself sufficiently to come down and eat and drink what the obsequious steward had placed ready for her.

Now, however, she lies, like a tiger, stretched out upon her side upon the open deck in front of the chart-house, and when you stoop and stroke her you find that her fur is deliciously hot, every hair alive with electricity.

CHAPTER III

BY the sea-gulls, if by nothing else, I should know that we were nearing land. For weeks the sea has been empty of them, but during the past two or three days there have been thousands upon thousands, flashing white against a flawless deep-blue sky, and early this morning we passed the island of Désirade,—which was among the many islands sighted by Columbus,—a long, flat wedge upon the very edge of the horizon. We make Guadeloupe soon after midnight.

Pointe-à-Pitre as I saw it this morning, backed with its panoply of mountains, is a poor place, a veritable black man's town, and it is necessary to drive a good twenty miles out into the country to get any real idea of the beauty of the island, when it comes upon one with a sense of something like enchantment after one has crossed the bridge at Salt River, which is in reality a narrow strip of sea dividing the kidney-shaped island toward the southern half.

Beyond this division the road begins to mount up and up in a series of sharp hair-pin bends

among innumerable sugar-cone mountains thick to the very top with vegetation, while the scenery unrolls itself behind one like a broad and brilliant ribbon, an endless shining pattern of bright-blue bays and scattered isles and deep gorges; of small villages, gold and brown like the wings of a moth, and scattered huts—the meanest, a single room roofed with palm-leaves, set in its own gem-like garden. Poinsettias; purple and rose-pink Bougainvillea; rose and scarlet crotons; hibiscus and plumbago; orange-trees laden with fruit; bananas with their immense banners of shining enamel-like green leaves overhung by the glossy foliage of breadfruit, more like shining metal than anything else.

The Englishman from off the boat, with whom I maintain a curious sort of armed neutrality,—for quite plainly he dislikes me as much as I dislike him, and yet at times we are glad to talk to each other in our own language,—was with me; and for that day, at least, so great was the enchantment of the place, we were almost friends.

Some fifteen miles from town we passed the cleared open place, the pedestal and bust which mark the spot where Columbus landed; and soon after this we came to an immense archway of gray dressed stone, magnificent in its conception,



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A TYPICAL NATIVE WOMAN OF MARTINIQUE

giving on to a long drive bordered with the tallest cocoanut palms that I have ever seen, towering and perfectly upright, silver-gray stems. An avenue designed to lead to something very magnificent in the way of palace or city, but leading here, in this place,—with “all the glades’ colonnades,”—to nothing more than a rougher track, a deeper bush, a greater exuberance of nature. An arch erected during the proud days of Louis XIV, with Heaven only knows what visions of a semi-royal colonization.

Fifty kilometers out from the port we drew up at the Hotel des Bains for lunch, and there saw the first white faces which we had chanced upon since starting: a couple of very slightly shaded young French girls in delicate muslin frocks; an old man; the French proprietor and his wife. Here, too, we discovered what is of all things the most precious, the rarest and most to be desired in life: a place where those who are sufficient to themselves may find peace and escape from the perpetual colds, the unutterable drab dreariness of an English winter; a place where one might, indeed, taste the almost forgotten joy of living within one’s income,—or, without any great uneasiness, upon one’s overdraft,—living at ease in mind and body.

For Monsieur Dole's Hotel des Bains is cheap, almost given away, indeed, with the franc as it is: full board with wine, thirteen to fifteen francs a day; the extravagance of a sitting-room and wide stretch of veranda, the equivalent of one and twopence a day in our money; board and lodging for a maid, one and sixpence a day, for a chauffeur, one and ninepence a day; garage accommodation for a car, twopence; with, actually, a reduction on all this for any long stay.

Déjeuner for three of us, my companion and myself in the large, clean, open dining-room—with the forests dipping like green-velvet mantles to the edge of the sea—and the chauffeur somewhere in the back regions, cost fifteen francs; roughly, four shillings. A salad of tomato and onions, eggs in butter, Jerusalem artichokes in white sauce, fresh tongue served hot with salad, a dish of wild raspberries,—of a finer grain, harder, and brighter than ours,—a bottle of claret apiece, iced water, and coffee—such coffee too, freshly roasted and ground and of the country. Could any one wish for anything better? The whole expense increased, as was explained to us when we went round to the back of the hotel to order the car and saw nothing of the chauffeur,—apart from a pair of feet clad in bright blue socks

hanging out over the door, while he took his siesta on the floor,—by the fact, as one might have suspected, that he had ordered an iced rum-punch.

Some day, I promise myself, I will come out to Guadeloupe again and spend two or three months in this hotel, a perfectly ideal place to work in. The beauty of the position and the cheapness are not all there is to it, either; for five minutes farther up the mountainside are the natural warm-water baths after which the hotel is named: three great square pools overhung with immense plumes of bamboo, mahogany trees hung with creepers showing between them as though in a dark frame, the intense azure patches of the sea far below them; pools of graduated depths, so that one may sit or stand with the water to one's chin. There were, indeed, a few native women sitting there with the odd effect of black heads and shining teeth set upon a clear metal platter of shining green, so deep was the shade; in water that is of an unchanging warmth, so near to the temperature of the skin that as I dipped my hand in it I could scarcely feel it—the same temperature at midnight, at dawn, and at midday. Think of that, you at home in England, with the kitchen stove, the hot-water supply, and the cook's temper forever at odds!

Yet, even here, where one pictures oneself with old Andrew Marvell, "Annihilating all that's made to a green thought in a green shade," sorrow has found its way,—albeit the sort of sorrow which wears a feather in its cap,—for over the door of one of the little dressing-rooms some swain has written these words:

Le cœur est porcelaine qui se brise, mais qui ne se
raccorde pas.

Signé Duquor : Juillet, 1923.

From the hotel we drove on another fifteen miles to Basse-Terre, down a succession of steep bends between groves of cocoa-trees and high palms. Basse-Terre is a far better town than Pointe-à-Pitre. In the upper part of it are immense solid old gray-stone buildings, houses and barracks and forts of the same period as the arch and the cocoanut avenue, and right on the edge of the sea are modern wooden houses and shops with brilliantly painted red-and-white and green-and-white striped and checked and starred and spotted shutters, closed during the heat of the day. In the center of its little *place* is a real merry-go-round—prancing wooden horses with flowing manes.

On the way back to the port we punctured a

tire, and while a new one was put on we waited in an old cottage with walls close upon three feet in thickness, where we were regaled with mandarin oranges from a high old tree just outside the door, dragged down by the weight of the golden fruit. A cottage of one large single room, very cool and full of soft umber lights, belonging to an old negro and his wife who showed us photographs of their daughter married to a Frenchman and living in Paris with her husband. In the beautiful, soft, round-syllabled French used by the negroes they told us about their other children, widely scattered throughout the world, and at parting presented me with two treasured beans of vanilla wrapped in newspaper which looked as though it were stained with blood from the sweet, perfumed juice which exuded from them.

We were obliged to stop again on our way back, to water our engine at a little garage over which was posted the delicious sign of *Au Gracieux Sourire*,—think of that for a motor-garage, with its smells!—and reached our boat with no more than a bare five minutes to spare before she sailed. Not that I myself should have greatly minded had I missed her, provided I could raise so much as a tooth-brush in the town, with a memory of the Hotel des Bains still fresh in my mind.

CHAPTER IV

GUADELOUPE grows upon one slowly, in its insidious loveliness; but Martinique flashes upon one like a great live emerald, catching one's breath with its beauty, its greenery, which is like nothing else I have ever seen, could ever have imagined; every shade of green on earth,—apart from that of the cool, gray-green English willows,—deep to black, and yet a shining black, in its shade, brilliant as a parrot's wing in the sunshine.

We arrived there this morning, Sunday, the great market-day of the week, and Fort de France, the port and capital, was all abuzz with life. The town is clean and well kept, with tall brick or color-washed houses, roofed with wooden slats or red tiles; with wide verandas massed with flowers, the brilliant plumes of bamboos and purple and rose-pink Bougainvillea waving above the garden walls, and clear water running in a deep conduit on each side of the street; more houses and shops, built of wood brilliantly painted and flush with the street.

Everywhere was color, the market-place a kaleidoscope of color: gowns and turbans of scarlet and crimson, vermillion and pink, crimson and



In the market, Fort de France

orange, sky-blue, royal-blue, and peacock-blue, green and yellow, the turbans tied with two smartly twisted ends erect like ears, one on each side of the head and in violent contrast to the color

of the gowns; stalls heaped with oranges and red and bright-green and vermillion peppers and purple egg-fruit, a few mangoes, though it is not yet



Oranges in Martinique

the season, pumpkins cut open to show their luscious rose and crimson centers, pomegranates with their thick red-and-yellow rinds slit, displaying their ruby-like centers; eggs and fowls, and

fish of every color, and white and gray rabbits. The colors shifted, mingled, and broke like waves as the people moved among the stalls—people who are in themselves more beautiful than anything



Bananas

else; women holding themselves like empresses, deep-breasted and upright in their immensely full, starched print gowns. For the Martinique negroes and negroes are surely the most splendid in all the world, their skins a clear and perfect black, their teeth flawless, while the great muscles of the men move like snakes beneath the skin. All alike are fresh and untired, though many have walked as much as thirty miles this morning, over the mountains, with their heavy baskets on their heads. And the laughter and talk are like

the sound of the sea in a cave, so deep and soft and mellow.

Three of us, the Englishman, a French lady

who is another passenger on the boat,—a tall and magnificently made woman with just enough of Tahitian to mellow the French blood in her veins,—and I, took a motor and drove out over the mountains to St. Pierre, the real capital of the island, which was totally destroyed by an eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902.

For some twenty-three miles the road mounts and mounts, and never in my life have I seen anything like the splendor and richness of the vegetation on each side of it: foliage, flowers, fruit. For the greater part of the way it passes along an immensely high and ever-rising ridge, with a deep ravine and silver thread of river far below, to right and left, running down to the great bay. Three miles from tip to tip of each horn and four miles in depth, the bay lay beneath us like a small platter of pure turquoise, the little islands and ships growing ever more toy-like as we looked back between the arching bamboos which edged the road, with ravine and hillside, deep in tree-fern, below them. The road twists so sharply that upon each short reach the next turn is completely lost to sight.

Here were little villages of very clean color-washed houses, and churches which looked as though they were made of colored cardboard, so

crowded that a greater part of their congregations debouched on to benches outside. Magnificently starched and colored and flounced congregations they were, though every now and then in front of some cottage we came across a group of laughing children at play, colored and shining like black pearls, naked as the day they were born—and not out of poverty, either, for it is impossible to imagine anything of the sort in this luxuriant land, but from sheer wanton delight in air and sunshine. And at one spot, beneath a hibiscus tree with brilliant hanging flowers shaped and colored like scarlet corals, sat an old man clad in little more than a tightly curling white beard.

About eighteen miles from St. Pierre the ground begins to drop. There were high walls of shining canes on each side of us, and presently we came across one house which had survived the catastrophe of 1902; and again the road twisted, bringing us within sight of the sea, and we dropped to the burial-place—or, rather, the dead bones—of what had once been a thriving town, with university and schools, a cathedral and a convent, many shops and many private houses, the most prosperous town in all the French West Indies.

To-day, when we visited it, we found forty or

fifty jerry-built wooden houses, a pathetic attempt at a market-place, a handful of grown people and children; a new town devoid of grandeur save for its surroundings. And yet, with all this, a place in which one was conscious of a brooding spirit that could have been nothing less than the spirit of death; a dry-boned and sultry, brooding death which stood with folded wings over the town where it had reaped so great a harvest.

There was one little café where we took our *déjeuner*, a rickety wooden affair facing the sea. The meals were served in an upper room which stretched the whole width of the house; beneath it was a sort of open hall with a tiled floor packed with barrels, bottles, and benches, where chickens wandered about at their own free will. Back of this were the kitchen and outhouses. In the whole place there could be no possible space for any other rooms, and yet the card which the bowing proprietor handed to me before I left reads like this:

Voyageurs, Touristes!

N'oubliez pas en passant à Saint-Pierre

de visiter le

SELECT-HOTEL

Rue Bouillé

(tout près du débarcadère)



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A VIEW OF THE RIVIÈRE MADAME, FORT DE FRANCE, MARTINIQUE



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A RUINED STREET IN ST. PIERRE, MARTINIQUE (1925)

Où vous trouverez :

Apéritifs divers, Casse-croute et Repas a toute heure. Cuisine moderne.

Service irréprochable.—Prix modérés.

Pension de Famille.

In the upper room four more than brunette Frenchmen were playing dominoes, splitting a bottle of wine among them. Two more, whose mothers, even more obviously, had "drunk too much coffee," one with a wooden leg and both very smartly dressed in large-check tweeds and flowing silk ties,—twanging loudly upon their guitars, decorated with bright-pink ribbons,—sang French love-songs. All this did nothing whatever to diminish that indescribable feeling of the immutability of everything on earth: a depression which flattened the good rum-punch, the claret, the simple country meal—brawn and tiny pasties the size of pennies, cold fish with a piquant sauce heavy in garlic; rabbit and *purée* of peas; wild raspberries and coffee. Even the sight of the small black pig and pullet which slept in a fond embrace upon the floor was powerless to lighten my gloom.

An old negro gave me a wonderful and graphic description of the eruption,—or, rather, what he saw of it from the other side of the island, for no

one now lives who was in it, or can tell exactly how it came upon the town. In the whole town there was but one man left alive: a man who had been imprisoned for murder the night before, shut up in a deep underground cell. Four days later his frenzied screams attracted attention, and he was found to be raving mad, scorched and blistered from head to foot.

The great eruption took place on the morning of May 8th. But for days before that there had been a sound like the continual roar of cannon inside the mountain, while a fine powdering of ashes had fallen over the town, lying so thick in the streets that the people moved about silently, like ghosts; and all the singing and laughing in the cafés, all the joking upon the quay, came to an end, beaten under by a weight of foreboding. The people went about their business white-faced and tight-lipped, refusing to leave the town which they so greatly loved—"the darlingest little town in the Antilles," as Lafcadio Hearn called it, with all its streets of seventeenth-century houses, its yellow walls and green hanging balconies, its cathedral and universities, its many shops,—for was it not rightly named the Paris of the West Indies?—its theaters and cafés; La Place Bertil, the pride of Martinique, with its many fountains, its gar-

dens so thronged in general by happy strolling citizens, overrun by laughing children; for of all the islands in the world this island of Martinique, with its mixture of French-negro blood, shows most strikingly what the true mating of different races can be like at its best, breeding women who are, indeed, unmatched in the whole world.

One can see it as it lay during those days, edged with the blazing sea, beneath a sunshine which is like the clear white light of electricity, with all its palm-fringed streets and gardens, its mountains and many streams, its wide and shining river, its *mouillage*, or landing-stage, its many flights of steps leading to the upper part of the town which must have made it so like Italy. The lovely capital of an altogether lovely island.

On May 5th the sound of cannonading within the mountain gathered to one continuous roar, while a suffocating wind blew from it and a stream of boiling mud,—which some one speaks of as “Mount Pelée bleeding black like a dying octopus,”—bursting forth, rolled down the side of the mountain, spreading out for many acres, moving at the rate of a mile a minute along the bed of the Rivière Blanche, carrying away a great sugar-factory in its course, dashing at last into the sea, throwing up fantastic fountains of steam

as though boiling lead had been poured into it.

Upon this night a very few people began to slip away as though ashamed of being seen leaving by daylight, jeered at by their fellows, who, with their own nerves all on edge, terrified and defiant, bitterly resented the very idea of any one being so mean-spirited as to forsake the town.

The night of May 7th was stiflingly hot. Early in the evening the Italian ship, *Orsolino*, steamed away; for the captain, who knew Naples, realized what was brooding over the fated town. At daylight next morning, however, the Quebec boat, *Roraima*, came cheerfully to anchor, to be gutted, charred, burnt to the water's edge in less than two hours. For at eight o'clock an explosion came like the bursting of a mine, cutting short a message which was even then being sent over the telegraph wires to Fort de France, and of which the one word to reach it, prelude to Heaven only knows what, was curiously and pathetically enough, *Allez*. It was the last word of a doomed city. A city which was in another moment devastated by a cyclone of red-hot dust and flame; a hurricane of sulphur before which the men in the streets were swept headlong, with clothes and flesh alike torn from them.

That was at eight o'clock, and, at that time,

people upon the far mountain summit declared that they saw a violet-gray cloud, luminous and shot with fire, belch forth from the torn crater like a charge from a cannon, striking the town and spreading to the sea, with the flames eddying and twisting like live things within it. In another moment the mountain itself, the blazing city, hills, and bays, were blotted out by a dense cloud of smoke and ashes which covered the entire island and spread to many of the nearer ones.

In this disaster there was no fall of lava, and it was altogether from the poisonous gases and the falling buildings, the flames which swept the town like a scythe, that the people died,—between twenty and thirty thousand of them,—while so terrible were the fumes which hung over the dead town for at least three days that those who ventured near it were found later, dead among the dead, with blackened and protruding tongues.

CHAPTER V

COLON is ugly and attractive and amazing. It is, indeed, more like an insect than a town. A long, low, scurrying, super-insect. A Robot among insects.

The coaling station is a creature apart: an immense, quickly running black spider with legs and arms which are beyond counting. In sober fact, the whole place is hideous; and yet it is so efficient, so powerful, with all its apparatus at once so slender and so strong, that it has that sort of beauty appertaining to anything altogether right for its purpose. In the glow of the setting sun it is, indeed, wonderful, with its immensely high, fine cranes, its network of aërial railways; no longer like an insect, but rather a piece of fantastic music, scrawled large, with many small blots, wild erasures, across the pure, clean gold of the sky. And above it all, this evening, three aëroplanes dip and circle, while solitary frigate-birds dip and circle with precisely the same motion, and so much nearer that they appear to be of the same size.

The compound which holds the offices of all the great shipping-lines visiting Colon is very attractive, with its large white buildings, deep-arched verandas, gardens, and palm-trees. But once out of this, real life begins with an endlessly long street, which is Panama Republic and "wet" on one side, United States Canal Zone and "dry" on the other; not that it matters much, for it is only, as the charwomen say in London, a matter of "just slipping across the road."

And yet there is a difference, an amazing difference, in what one hears, what one sees, and, above all, in what one feels—the very atmosphere.

As night falls the American town of Cristobal is dull and dark, and most uncommonly furtive; while Colon is glaring and noisy and picturesque, openly disreputable, cheerful, drunken, amorous.

Here on the "wet" side of the road are children laughing and screaming, spilling over the sidewalk in such masses that one is driven into the gutter. Here are green parrots and scarlet and yellow macaws at every window, in every doorway; rubbishy Indian shops with rubbishy souvenirs and silks, far dearer than in England, and Panama hats and stuffed crocodiles. One wonders who on earth can be found to buy a stuffed crocodile. In the doorway of one little shop a small antelope

and a monkey are tied to one string, like the pig and the pullet at St. Pierre. There is an endless succession of drinking shops, and shops where liquor may be bought and carried across the road to the snugly closed shops and houses out of which men peer, with heads which look as though a barber, intending to shave them, had started upon the backs of their heads in mistake for their faces.

I really intended only to stay and dine at the Hotel Washington, but the editor of the *Star and Herald*, a paper printed in Spanish and English, with whom I dined, kept me enchanted, by his descriptions of the proud Spanish families who live but just back from the Canal Zone, until it was too late to return to the boat for the night. These families live exactly as they have lived for centuries past, coming into town at long intervals, by a series of trails cut through the primitive forest or pampas, with an endless procession of pack- and saddle-mules.

I am writing now at seven in the morning, feeling all the better for a good sleep in a real bed, in a cool, airy room high up on the third floor, with the leaves of the cocoa-palms swishing and rustling like rain outside the window.

The wind is sweeping straight off the Atlantic and right through the hotel, with its every door



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A TYPICAL NATIVE WOMAN OF FORT DE FRANCE,
MARTINIQUE

and window wide open. And, to my mind, one of the joys in reaching the real tropics is to be able to sit in a strong draft and feel the air racing through one's thin muslin garments. And what a wind it is, too! One sits and thinks: "How cool! How delicious! How can any one complain of the heat here?" And yet with the least exertion, so little as stooping to pick up one's scattered papers, one is dripping. I am so languid as to be thankful that I have no luggage to bother about; concerned as to whether it will be possible for me to gather energy to call for my bill, mount one of the funny little zone carriages, with its orange-and-white striped umbrella, and make my way back to the boat.

The Panama Canal does not run from east to west as one expects it to, but due south from Limon Bay on the Atlantic side to the widest part of Gatun Lake, where it twists sharply to the east. It is not, indeed, a canal at all, but a bridge of water eighty-seven feet in height.

It has six locks: three at the entrance to Gatun Lake, one at Pedro Miguel, which lowers Pacific-bound ships to the level of Lake Miraflores, and two between Miraflores and sea-level. Each lock is double, so that ships going in opposite directions may pass one another. All the machinery of the

canal is run by electricity, while the Gatun dam and spillways serve to keep the water in the lake level, allowing for dry seasons and evaporation. The dam itself is one and a half miles long at its crest.

I believe that I am right in these details, but anything may be, in truth, just the opposite of what I have said. My mind has a way of suddenly spinning round on its own pivot over facts, and the only fact of which I am always altogether certain is the way in which anything new impresses itself upon me. After all, any more definite, scientific, or practical knowledge of the canal can so easily be come by at any public library.

To me it seems that the Panama Canal is something alive, uncanny, and quite suddenly created: the outcome of a whim of some demigod having nothing whatever to do with the pale, set-looking men whom one sees,—appearing so small, inadequate, and fumbling, with an air of somehow being left behind and very badly scared—about the margin of it. More than anything else I have ever known, the silence of it all impresses me: the perfectly noiseless, relentless motion of every atom of machinery, with its air of stealing a march upon humanity.

The entrance to the canal is flat, desolate, terribly depressing. The air is like the taste of flat soda-water upon one's lips. One's limbs drag; one's lungs feel as though they had been ironed out with a hottish iron and a damp handkerchief; one's skin is moist and sticky to the touch; and there is an odd smell in the air, the smell of a close tailor's shop.

To my mind there is nothing in the world so desolate as mangrove swamps, and I wonder how many men they have, in truth, driven to despair, madness, suicide: the gloom and damp mists and the fever-specters of them; the grotesque and sinister figures of the roots at low water. Here, now, on each side of us, are mangroves and ragged acacias. Upon the low, half-hearted hills of the landward horizon are gray wooden and concrete houses, two or three twisted palm-trees; eternal hieroglyphics of cranes, electric cables, and standards scrawled across the sky.

It all looks like the very end, the last shunting station of the hopes of man. Instead of this it is the beginning of something so wonderful, so altogether and confidently presumptuous that one goes through it in a state of panic. Not on one's own account, but because of what one feels might happen to the world if things like this went on;

the chance of its slipping entirely out of gear.

At the top of the first lock of the three which will raise us into Gatun Lake, is a large mail-steamer which looks as though posed upon a wall, while small squat engines of blue and yellow, shaped like tanks and worked by electricity, dumb and dreadfully concentrated, run up the slope to this height and disappear over what might very well be the end of the world. As the mail-steamer drops from sight, six of these beetle-like creatures take us in tow. Two run on in front with ropes from each side of the bow; two, with more ropes amidships, keep us off from the walls which rise high above us; and two more hold us back. Despite all precautions there are accidents. One little engine still lies derelict, having been plunged into the water by a ship which rushed away too impetuously under her own steam as she left this lock, making for the Atlantic; breaking through the chain fenders which in general allow no ship that is not moving at its staid and proper pace, to "bullock" through them.

We pass into the lock through an immense gateway from which steel gates have rolled silently back into the sides of the canal; the gates close, and an amazing process begins.

In reality, of course, the water rushing in from

culverts rises, taking us with it. But that is not in the least what it seems like. Rather, the walls of the lock, the top of which has been on a level with the crow's-nest, appear to sink very slowly down and down, drawn under the water by some force which leaves us high on a level with the top of it, paralyzed with wonder. The whole effect is so keen and piercing that one is perfectly prepared to see the causeway, the little engines, the slack-looking men who seem so entirely, blindly indifferent, ultimately disappear beneath the waters; while we and our ship, all the impedimenta and furniture and stores and machinery and funnels and fuel, all the people, crew and passengers, with all their petty strivings, engrossments, generosities, and jealousies, their families and boxes and chairs—the whole caboodle are shot up heavenward, amazing Peter; along with that god upon earth who sits at the top of the center lock,—before him a flat working model of every wall and gate, every scrap of machinery,—and, himself alone, throws out the switches, controlling every operation, every movement of the waters, and of the ships upon the face of the waters.

It seems as though a lifetime had passed in this amazing process, while the barometer in the captain's cabin sinks beneath one's eyes, with a heav-

ier weight of air. And yet, from the moment the great steel gates close behind us, to the moment the second pair above opens to admit us, is no more than thirty minutes in all. Not the least surprising part of the whole affair is the fact that no one appears to be doing anything whatever, apart from the pilot, who walks up and down the topmost bridge, barking out an occasional order.

If I were down upon the lower deck, which I now regard as a sort of dog-shelf, I could see next to nothing, the whole advance being hidden by the fo'c'sle. But from my proud position upon the bridge I see the whole play opening before me; while as we are raised to the highest level of the last Atlantic lock, Gatun Lake (made from the deepening and widening of the old bed of the Chagres River; eighty-seven feet above sea-level, twenty miles long, and covering an area of one hundred and sixty square miles) is unfolded like a picture laid flat upon a table, while the clean, fresh air blowing across it fills one's lungs so that one feels almost like a real person again.

Close to the entrance into the lake is a large village, housing some of the three thousand white men and five thousand colored people employed by the Canal Zone Company. We see a series of

tennis-courts at one side, and at the other golf-links with men in white clothes wandering rather limply across them. The whole village seems less significant than a bee's nest hung upon the bough of a tree at the entrance to an unexplored forest; for I cannot get over the idea that, as a whole, humanity has had nothing whatever to do with all this.

It is a misty day, and I think that the shoreless lake seems all the lovelier for this, as we rise to it and see it dotted with innumerable islands, which are in reality the tops of one-time hills; every island a tight bouquet of intensely green palms, hung with vivid green creepers.

Toward the end of the afternoon the sun comes out, not brilliantly, but in a flattened golden sheen, while the air is so damp that it seems as though everything were covered with a fine-meshed gray gauze, cut by the close-pressed wedges of wild duck, which are forever crossing and recrossing it with the sun upon their backs.

At the end of the lake the little islands thicken and gather to mountains upon each side of us; until we slide in between the high cliffs which men are still cutting away—standing as casually as any suburban householder hosing his garden of an evening after business hours—with a pressure

of water so intense that the walls of the cliffs fall, flatly and almost silently, unbroken like slices of cut cake.

In between these cliffs we pass to the Gaillard Cut, six miles in length, among mountains which tower peak upon peak, almost perpendicularly upon each side of us. Of all the wonders of the canal, in the main constructive, this vast and utilitarian work of destruction which formed the Gaillard Cut—the one “man-made” cañon in the world—is the greatest. For here is no quiet canal, wending its way through flat meadows, but that bridge of water still continued at the same height as Gatun Lake, cutting in among the mountains of the Great Divide. Of all the heartbreaking difficulties which the Americans encountered in their task, there can have been none like those encountered here. The land-slips or slides which in a few moments destroyed the work of months or even years, and others even more devastating which continued with dreadful certainty at the rate of two or two and a half feet a day, for months upon months on end, must have dragged the very heart out of the idealists who had evolved from their dreams this wonder of the world, breaking into the will of the desert with that strength which is indeed the child of

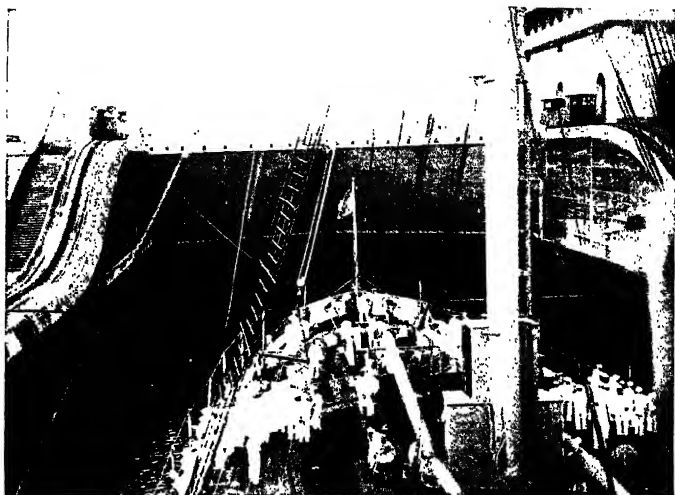


Photo. Topical Press Agency

THE U. S. S. "HENDERSON" IN ONE OF THE LOCKS OF THE PANAMA CANAL

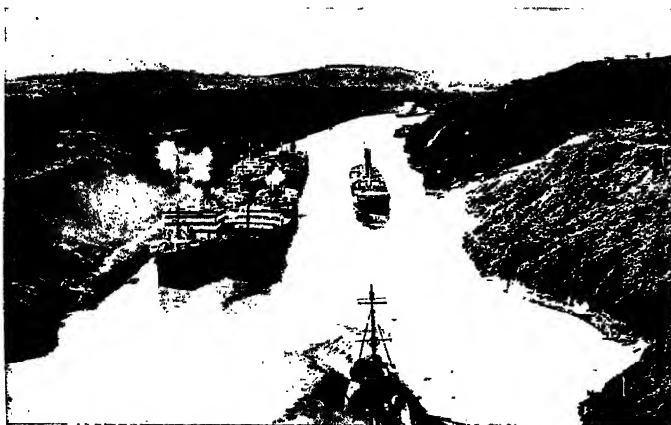


Photo. Topical Press Agency

THE SLIDE IN THE GAILLARD CUT OF THE PANAMA CANAL, SHOWING
THE DELAY CAUSED TO SOUTH-BOUND SHIPS

dreams, overthrowing mountains and gorges, rivers and jungles; vanquishing, even, that dreaded Cucaracha Slide which, having turned the French aside from their path, broke out afresh with savage vehemence the moment that the Americans laid their hands upon its territory, shooting across the entire canal prism.

Here, now, as though in radiant triumph, the scenery—like a woman of the Sabines scarred and torn, and mantled only in her own hair—is wild and wonderful beyond all words. For where the garments of forest trees and creepers are slashed away from them, the scarred cliffs show pink and purple, lovely in the last level rays of the evening sun; streaked with great masses of greenery, toppling trees and trailing creepers which the fall of soil has dragged away with it. In one place a huge perpendicular cliff of absolutely clear vermilion, topped with green, rises against the clear greenish sky in front of us.

By the time we reach the single lock of Pedro Miguel the whole scene is aflame with the setting sun, like the brief but gaudy transit of some Oriental magnate, crossing the street with all the panoply of one who sets out to war.

As we enter the first of the two remaining locks a train running between Colon and Panama comes

out from among the mountains and stops at a little station upon our right.

All through the day, so long that it has seemed altogether unconnected with time,—for I have not even gone down to the meals which in general punctuate it,—the whole scene has been like the gigantic setting for some Titanic drama. Now the play itself comes upon us, pathetic because it is so small, infinitely touching as is every aspect of man in the desert; ridiculously inadequate for the setting—and yet, within it, holding the material for a hundred little plays in little theaters.

Across from the station, on the opposite side of the lock, there is a group of dilapidated cars and mule-carts, and the American soldiers who tumble out of the train on their way back from some race meeting or other (for it is a fête-day in the real world) make a dash to reach them before the gates open to let us through. We are sinking quickly now, going down and down instead of up and up as we did at the entrance from the Atlantic, and the men running across the narrow wall above us look like nothing more than a host of neutral-tinted ants, with their twinkling legs. Those who are alone get over

in time; but there are many more with women and children who find themselves cut off and, standing along the sides of the lock, wait for us to go through.

The sun has almost set by now and sky and water and steep wooded hillside, the color of spilt wine and purple fuchsias, are reflected upon the hard white wedge-like faces of the men, very lean and standing very upright, as though nerving themselves against being overborne by the heavy brooding silence of the place, the sullen forests, the hot suggestive twilight: as though they were saying to themselves, setting their jaws over it, anxious and unsmiling, "It looks as though it might get us, but—gee-whiz!—we won't have it!" The yellow-faced babies which so many of them hold in their arms, the children who cling to them, the half-caste wives who lean against them—full-breasted and voluptuous, as curved as their husbands are angled, waving a languid and indifferent hand to us, with passionate dark eyes raised to their husbands—have got them far more certainly than any wild.

Night has closed in before we pass the second of the Miraflores locks and drop to sea-level: a perfectly clear greenish-indigo night with a full

moon overhead. As I look back over the length of the ship, the sight is extraordinarily fairylike, fantastic, and unreal.

Backed with high-peaked mountains, the causeways to the locks, shortened and broadened by perspective, show like the top of an immense Christmas cake, the tall white concrete pillars with their lights, clusters of five hundred wax bulbs under concrete shades, like candles set above them. The little engines with their bright crimson lamps add a still more fantastic note of decoration to the scene. It is an appropriate finish to the transit through an isthmus in itself fantastic beyond all words, worked to their own ends by men who, as it seems, could scarcely have realized the magnitude of their own powers.

Take it all in all, the whole effect of the Canal Zone is theatrical. The islands are not islands at all, but the tops of mountains pushing up through the water; the mountains themselves are cut to pattern, placed just so; the green of the vegetation is more than a trifle overdone, as are the exaggerated madder and vermilion of the cliffs. The machinery of the gigantic transformation scene left lying about, with the pathetic remains of the heroic failure of Lesseps, suggests the idea that it has all been brought there by

trolleys, small enough because of the primal flatness; that the valleys which open between the mountains are mere wings leading to the green-room, with nothing whatever at the back of them. We have the feeling that it all must come to an end when the last of the lights go out, and the electrician, forsaking his engines, goes home to supper and bed, leaving the night watchman seated on a little camp-stool in the center of this vast stage, his elbows on his knees, his chin cupped in his hands, staring out in front of him and wondering what on earth has been the good of it all, thinking over those days when he himself took a part in the great play, wore the crown of a king, or saw himself as one with God, out-doing God, for the amusement or convenience of a gaping world.

We stop at Balboa for water and some necessary repairs to the engine; but I am too tired to go on shore, while it is far too late to drive out to Old Panama. Besides, I spent so much money at Guadeloupe and Martinique and Colon that I am beginning to get a little scared at to what will happen when I get to Tahiti, unless my agents have meanwhile sold something for me, either in America or England. Not that I should bother over-much about ways and means, for one

can always get where one means to go, unless I were dead beat by a heat so enervating that I have been obliged to tie a towel round my neck while I stooped over my work. It is best to leave all one's money worries upon the knees of the gods—the only knees I have ever altogether trusted.

The moonlit quay at Balboa is deserted, apart from a few policemen negligently swinging their "love sticks" in one hand, with the other hand stuck in a trouser-pocket, who wander on and off the ship in pursuit of their express duty of seeing that the prohibition regulations are fully carried out.

I am terribly troubled as to how I am to register and post a packet of manuscripts; still more troubled when, having entrusted it to one of these gentlemen, I hear from the captain how many brandies he has consumed. My one comfort is that a "dry" American is probably as well seasoned to liquor as any other man on earth.

CHAPTER VI

ALL night we have been going dead slow so that we may avoid reaching the tangle of the Tuamotu Archipelago—the Dangerous Isles, as we English call them—at night. Now we are in the midst of hundreds upon hundreds of atolls lying level with the sea, broken rings of coral a few hundred—or less than one hundred—feet broad, with wide-open lagoons inside them and cocoanut-palms on the northwest side, away from the prevailing winds. Rings of coral and scanty sand, simmering in an eternal haze of damp heat, overhung by a thick cloud of mosquitos which looks like a mist about them. Islands where sane or specially courageous white men may yet be found to make their homes. Amid these islands—some of the largest of which are less than two miles one from another—we must now steer our course.

It is late afternoon when we reach Tahiti, and I tremble with excitement at the first sight of it, as something which I could never have imagined. I had thought Martinique green, as I once thought

Ireland green, but they are drab in comparison with this. It seems, indeed, as though there were no other color in the world which could ever again matter in the slightest degree; as though one not only saw it but was shot through and through with it, permeated with it, so that one's every thought was green, reflecting the glitter of the shining, opaque, enamel-like leaves which cast back the light like mirrors, of the fine transparent leaves, the fern-like foliage. I am old enough now to have schooled myself not to expect much, but I could never have expected anything like this, excelling all expectation, full in the blaze of the late afternoon sun.

One end of the island runs up from the sea in a sharp wedge, and then come mountains. Mountain upon mountain, rocky, gray-blue, purple-blue, indigo, and a blue which is close upon black; peaked and jagged; with more far-away mountains the precise shade of faded harebells.

The highest peak of all, Aorai—and it is these vowels that make the Tahitian language so lovely—has her head in the lead-gray and silver of cumulus clouds, but the Diadem, the pride of Tahiti, with her seven piercing peaks of deep indigo, is flung across with no more than the



THE FAR-FAMED DIADEM, TAHITI

lightest scarf of that mist which lies thick among the innumerable ravines. The foot-hills and lower slopes are of that same vivid and indescribable green, with—and here is an extravagance of beauty—a broken rainbow arched above the town. The white wooden buildings and toy churches are embowered and almost lost in trees deeply green as the velvet of a huntsman's coat, splashed in places with the clear fervent scarlet of the flamboyant, not yet in its full glory.

There is no ugly quay to mar Papeete, the one town and port of the island; no chimneys, cranes, and blackened buildings, the cloven hoof of most seabound towns. The small wooden landing-stage, this afternoon, resembles the tulip-beds at Hampton Court, with a breeze-blown parterre of girls in the lightest of muslin and thin silk gowns,—straw-colored and daffodil yellow and white and pink and rose, mauve and fuchsia, gray and blue of every shade,—the most of them flounced to the waist. Girls with broad-brimmed hats or with flowing wavy hair falling far below their waists, wreathed with flowers; and mingled with these, young men and old men in white suits or shirts and *paréus*. For the whole island takes holiday at the incoming of the French boats.

Right opposite to Papeete, seemingly so near that its reflection almost touches us (though it may be in truth twelve or fifteen miles away) lies the island of Moorea, all its many peaks pure amethyst, filmed over with gold in the light of the setting sun; the shadows a deeper purple cut with gold, the water in the little lagoon deep olive. Though mountain and water are alike black—the mountain black velvet, the sea a shimmering satin, before I can get away from the ship. For the young French officers insist upon my drinking to what they call our “friendhood,” in a glass of sweet champagne; while the murmur of voices from the landing-stage beneath us, slurred syllables, soft vowels, lap like small waves on a sandy shore.

It is Saturday night and mercifully the customs officer has started celebrating it in good time, being so altogether “market ripe” that seeing two boxes for every one of mine he shakes his head in despair and allows me to go my way without so much as a tentative offer of keys, along the shore to “Johnny’s.” Johnny’s is the only place in which any one with any sort of soul can stay in Papeete, though there is a pre-tentious hotel in the heart of the town where you can put your body when you have nothing better

to do with it, and eat your meals. At Johnny's nothing is supplied beyond the rooms and the *petit déjeuner*; actually supplied that is, for how infinitely more there is to it!

First Johnny himself, or Paree, as he prefers to be called, the son of the fattest woman and most famous cook in the Pacific, the friend of innumerable wanderers, the last refuge of innumerable derelicts. Johnny himself is round and fat and cherubic, with the forehead of a dean. One can see him wearing a round black shovel hat and a bishop's apron or wreathed like Bacchus in vine-leaves, his smiling mouth smeared with grape-juice. As it is, he is attired in a dark silk *paréu* and white singlet. He is kind and smiling, and beyond belief glad to see one; so altogether and artlessly charming that it is little wonder to me that in speaking of Tahiti every one I have ever met who came from here has spoken of Johnny first. And this is not all there is to it, either, for his house is immediately opposite the sea, and from my latticed veranda—which forms in reality a second room—I look down upon it, through a tapestry of solid green and scarlet, to where the lanterns of the fishermen flicker like fireflies along the reef.

I have just come back from eating my dinner

at an unorthodox little restaurant facing the quay. It is kept by a Frenchman and an Irishman, who, dripping with heat in their singlets and white trousers, serve the most delicious food imaginable, helped by one small bronze boy beautiful as a statue.

The tables are on a veranda debouching on the road; and here were officers of all grades from the boats; young Frenchmen and other young men of every gradation of shade with their Tahitian friends, dark beauties with flower-bound hair and pale flower-like silk dresses; four black cats with brilliant green eyes, all precisely alike, which sprang up on every side of one like the creatures of a dream. Laughter and light, the twang of a guitar; salad and grilled chicken and omelette and good red wine with friendliness.

I was happy there and I am happy now, back at Johnny's, wandering about my room,—grandiloquently designated "the countess's room,"—which is fantastically hung with scarlet and white *paréus*. I revel in that sense of space which makes the end of a voyage almost as good as the beginning. It is one of the many delightful reactions of life, such as the unsung joy of falling

out of love, with its delightful sense of altogether fresh possibilities.

There seems to be nothing more than a bottom sheet on my bed,—of course no blankets,—and trying to attract the attention of a maid of some sort I am reassured by a distinctly masculine, friendly American voice on the other side of the thin wooden partition, informing me that I shall find a top sheet folded across the foot. An informal little introduction which seems to warrant my protesting against the rattle of a typewriter close against my head, spoiling the beat of the surf in my ears; apart from which there is no sound save the murmur of voices as barefooted people pad softly by in the dusty road, the whisper of lovers along the strip of green between it and the sea.

I was up at five o'clock this morning, to visit the market. But there was nothing whatever interesting in it, though I enjoyed meandering back to Johnny's along the waterfront, where the families aboard the tiny ketches and schooners and cutters anchored there were making their morning toilet in a bland, leisurely way, regardless of the long hiatus which occurred between

discarding their night wear, hanging it out among the rigging to air, and getting into their best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes.

There were rolls and butter and coffee, and paw-paw and bananas and melon on the veranda at Johnny's when I got back. All of Johnny's boarders were there: two American men, the Englishman who came over on the same boat with me, a Russian, and an American married couple in their dressing-gowns, talking and laughing, wandering off to the bath-room,—a large, cool stone tank, walled round and roofed over, with an immense shower,—and reappearing, picking up the conversation where they had dropped it, with their hair still dripping. These Americans had evidently been in Tahiti long enough to have all their country's irritable restlessness buffed off them.

I have an idea that my veranda will be a very good place to write in; at least so I tell myself, though at the back of my mind I know better. I know that it is, indeed, a place in which to dream, leaning back in a long chair or opening one of the small lattice shutters and lolling over the rail, exchanging pleasantries with passers-by whom one has never seen before. In my room at the back of the veranda the serving maid is sweeping the

floor. She wears a bright pink-silk dress flounced to the waist, with purple violets embroidered upon the low and sleeveless bodice; her wavy hair, flowing to her waist, is wreathed with flowers, and she is smoking a cigarette.



Sweeping the room, with many intervals of dreaming

Another maid comes into the room to talk to her. This girl, who is dressed in pale lemon-colored muslin, has a guitar in her hand and the two of them chat together,—chat, chat, chat,—dis-

cussing the tune which she picks out upon it, and love and lovers. What a place, what a place for me to find myself in! I who am in general ravaged by activity. A place where time melts like the mist upon the mountains, and is no more to be caught or woven to any useful end.

CHAPTER VII

I HAVE come for a long, long drive into the country with one of the young officers from the steamer, a French boy of good family who had an Irish ancestress in some way remotely connected with myself. We had bespoken a tin Lizzie, yesterday, to call for us at half-past six, but it was an hour later when we did get off, what with the coffee being late and the amount of melon that we ate for our *petit déjeuner*, and the something or other that had happened to the chauffeur and the car. Still, it was heavenly when we once got started. Rain had fallen throughout the greater part of the night, and the island was a thing of perfume and glitter, with the drops still showering down from the trees, and rainbow clouds above Moorea, the sea inside the reef showing flattened streaks of pale and dark opal.

To begin with, our way lay along the sea, here and there on the very edge of the sand, through cocoanut groves and colonies of small white and pink and yellow wooden houses, with wide veran-

das like dolls' houses. They were hedged off from the road with brilliant scarlet and crimson and green crotons and such hibiscus as I have never seen, an infinite variety of it. There were blossoms with



The pandanus tree

soft double petals like large hollyhock flowers, of the very palest yellow and pink and white; large single blossoms of a deep ruby and scarlet, and blood-red with fringed and pointed petals; rounded blossoms of

vermilion, orange, pink, rose-pink, blush pink, and that magenta-like color which edged the lengths of flannel used for petticoats in my nursery days.

In some places the mountains rose sheer on one side of us, cut by deep ravines filled with an amazing vegetation, not in the least like ordinary trees and shrubs. There were green and pale-yellow striped leaves shaped like the spear-heads of gods; glossy green leaves like immense fans; the fronds of ferns brown and hairy as Pan's hock; the long pale leaves of wild bananas; the tall straight stems of what is called here the mapau tree, with immense flanged roots like folds of stiff silk upright above the ground, and fluted trunks like Ionian columns. In the sea at the other side of us, which was perfectly smooth, clear, and shining, fishermen waded up to their waists, dragging their nets through the water, so clearly reflected that each man seemed like the upper half of two men welded together.

At one spot the side of the mountain was hollowed out by an immense cave, hundreds of feet high, almost completely dark, with the unimaginably long roots of trees hanging down within it, and a continual drip of water into the dark and ominous pool which paved it.

More and more I feel that this island is not a place in which to paint. There are too many strong primal colors; it is at once too artless and too passionate. The vegetation is too like the

packed hothouse of a millionaire. The background of sky and mountain is purposely set for the life drama of an artless, material, and yet primitive people.

Among the rocks in the ravines are many skeletons, for the people once hid the bodies of their departed chiefs there so that their enemies might not get at them. Thus any wanderer up-country in Tahiti may be confronted by death grinning out upon him suddenly amid bowers of ferns, the spurt and spray and whisper of those innumerable waterfalls which flow with an outward curve like flying-buttresses from the top of high, incurving cliffs; finishing touch to those dark figures of dread and melancholy which step hand in hand with love and beauty through the slow and silent dance of tropic days.

I am scribbling as best I can upon my knee while we rattle along. The air is full of scents: the smell of guavas, like warm flannel, of mangoes, daturas; of dust and a depth of damp vegetation untouched by the sun; of plants like animals; of sweet ginger-flower and wild gardenia, or *tiare*, the national bower of Tahiti, of lantana, with the stuffy odor of nettle beds at home in England; of seaweed and stagnant salt-water pools. And the sibilant secret *hush-hush-*

hush of palms, the pat of small waves on the shore are forever in the ears.

Two tall bronze colored boys, on the edge of manhood, run out of the sea, and, vaulting upon a white horse and a chestnut horse, dash up the narrow steep slope of sand and across the road in front of us. Fine spray, gold with sunshine, showers out of their hair as they go, and silver drops stream down their wet bodies.

Something stirs against a garden hedge as we pass it—a hedge behind which grow balsams and zinnias of every shade, jasmines, crimson and yellow crotons, crimson and yellow cannas—and we see a youth leading a white heifer, white as a transparent silk stocking on a woman's leg, against the flaming hibiscus bushes. The boy, wide-eyed with terror lest we dash into him and his charge, presses back into the shrubbery, out of our way.

Girls run out of the cottage gardens and throw flowers into our car; others leap upon the steps and hang garlands—which they must have had in readiness for any chance passer-by—around our necks. They have not the slightest air of expecting anything in return, these laughing girls with flowing hair and white teeth.

The island is roughly divided in two by a wide

causeway and banks of trees, close upon forty miles out from Papeete. Just before crossing the causeway we stop at the house of a Tahitian friend of my friend, who comes out to be introduced to me. He promises to have luncheon ready for us when we return, for we are going on still farther.

We cross the causeway between an inland lagoon and the sea—water clear as glass without so much as a ripple to break the reflection of unnumbered islets; bays curving so sharply that they look like islands—and enter a series of deep woods, broken by clusters of houses with their gardens, and pass along a road so narrow that the masses of hibiscus growing upon each side of us are pressed back like wall hangings of brilliant patchwork.

We come to a space which is a little more open. On one side of us is the sea, on the other, a hundred yards back from the road, are immensely tall cliffs with waterfalls streaming down them at the distance of every quarter of a mile or less, silver threads and silver ribbons, and widths of silver tissue hung with mist.

When we get back to Maou-u's he protests that had we only let him know earlier he would have had a better meal ready for us, more for us to

eat. At this my companion turns to me, laughing. "Only wait and see," he says.

M̄aou-u has a little guest-house across the road, and on the veranda of this our luncheon is served to us. We are waited upon by one of the girls who live with the family, not at all a servant, but more like a lady in waiting. She is a tall, deep-breasted creature with great dark eyes swimming with passion, love, and melancholy; the offspring of some American captain's stray fancy for a girl of the race to which Marcaline, despite her assertion to the contrary, so plainly belongs.

More to eat! How would it be possible? Marcaline brings us an immense dish piled with fresh oysters, five dozen of them; a savory omelette; fried chicken and some sweet, succulent beanlike vegetable; fried plantains, black coffee. To all of which we do such justice—think of it, five dozen oysters between two of us!—that it seems impossible that we should ever again be able to rise from the low chairs into which we have sunk. We lie back without a word, perfectly content to watch our cigarette smoke rising up against the dark green of the trees, just sufficiently awake to realize our entire contentment, no more.

When we do at last take our departure Maou-u's wife and three children, Marcaline and another girl, with Maou-u himself—stout and smiling, utterly refusing to accept anything in return for his hospitality, delighting me with an invitation to come out and stay at his guest-house—and two shy smiling youths, gather to see us into our motor, already piled with ripe coconuts, a basket of guavas, a bunch of fresh plantains. The girls hang round our necks garlands of white and yellow ginger-flowers, the heavily perfumed cups of the pandanus fruit, gardenias, and pink and crimson roses. Every word they say, every glance of their dark eyes, is full of kindness toward me, more than kindness for the handsome young Frenchman, a boy altogether so delightful that there is nothing that I should like better than to own him as my son.

To be kind, to be happy, to love and be loved; to find oneself surrounded by beauty and perfume and sunshine and sea-air, blest with an infinity of leisure. Is it to be wondered that many men forget that there is anything else left in life to be desired?

The *Kantara* is sailing early to-morrow morning, and a couple of officers come to make their adieux over a last glass—though that “one last

glass" is a merely formal way of putting it—of Johnny's iced rum-punch glowing with golden fruits. Surely it is one of the most enticing drinks imaginable!

It is after nine o'clock, for they have been extra busy with the cargo, and we are out on the narrow slip of crab-ridden grass opposite the house, between the sea and the road, while the whole entertainment is of the sort impossible for any England-bound English man or woman to imagine. The housemaid and parlormaid—I use the only words I can find to describe the nymphs who bring out the punch—have changed into even brighter silks than they have worn during the day, combed out their long hair, and placed hibiscus blooms behind their ears—and it is the left ear for the girl who wants a lover and the right ear for the girl who is contented, or vice versa; I can never quite remember which. Not that it matters, for they themselves make certain of not being left in the lurch, wearing a bloom behind each ear.

The girls have their guitar with them, and sitting down upon the grass at our feet, or upon the benches at our side, sing to us—love-songs and that strange haunting Tahitian song of which the only words seem to be, "How happy I am! oh,

how happy I am!" set to the tune of an old French Baptist hymn.

Apart from the singing and playing, low notes and low crooning voices, the night is almost silent. What sounds there are, beyond the shrilling of the cicadas—striking upon the ear as though a myriad wires vibrated between the ground beneath one's feet and the star-strewn sky—is dulled by love and languor. Young men and girls in muslins with flounced skirts pad softly by, whispering to one another. Large, majestic women with straight white cotton dresses to their feet sail past with a flotilla of small children about them; and there seem to be more children in Tahiti than I have ever seen before, for whatever the admixture of blood may do in other directions, it very certainly does not lead to sterility.

"Love and languor." The words swim gently through my mind as the keynote to Tahiti, or rather to the full understanding of it, for I do not believe that it is of the very faintest use to expect any full-blooded, warm-hearted people to be moral with so much time on their hands and in a climate like this, among girls so gentle and smiling, so much more kind than immoral. As to working hard or continuously, it is out of the question. Never in all my life have I taken so

long to dress and undress; never have I wandered about my room with such vagueness, such long pauses in everything I happen to be doing, though goodness knows it would be impossible, with decency, to wear fewer clothes than those which I put on and take off me. The fact is that one never can keep to one thing at a time. One's brain is so full of all sorts of odd quotations, odd ideas, impulses to do something altogether different. One is, indeed, in a continuous sort of pleasant swoon. I am convinced that if I lived here I should get into the habit of reading nothing whatever beyond anthologies.

Merely looking out of my window, or leaning over my balcony rail, takes much time. To begin with, I am absorbedly interested in what the people in the next house are doing, waving hands to the domestics who sweep a little, smoke a little more, and make love a great deal—all precisely as they do here, and yet, as ever, the house next door is more interesting than one's own. Then in the front there are the land-crabs to beguile me, so like stout city gentlemen bolting down into the Underground on their way home at night, running in and out of their holes, forever in a prodigious hurry. There are the amazing ways of the sun and moon and the clouds; the rain which comes

down in sudden terrific sluices as though the sky had opened overhead; and, above all, the ways of the wind which, rising suddenly in a terrible passion, sweeps through the house, carrying everything with it, setting every door and window banging.

Really, when I come to think of it, the only thing I ever do with decision here is getting up in the morning,—the antithesis of my way at home,—for the mornings are heavenly and I do not sleep very well; the mosquito curtains remind me of the refrain which a Spanish lover sang to his mistress: “Neither with thee nor without thee have I any peace,” for with them it is too stuffy for words, while without them it is impossible to rest at all. I scalded one arm rather badly on the boat, and the new skin, young, tender, and childlike, is so tempting that the mosquitos literally jostle one another gourmandizing upon it.

To-night two large wreaths of roses and gardenias hang one upon each post at the end of my bed. By whom they were sent I know not, though I suspect the housemaid, for there is no mosquito curtain here. Yesterday I pointed out to her that it should be taken down and washed. She took it down this morning, declaring that it would dry in less than no time, would be up again long be-



ONE OF THE LADIES IN WAITING AT MAOU-U'S HOSPITABLE HOUSE



A FISHERMAN'S HOUSE IN TAHITI

fore I was ready for bed. But, of course, it is not there. No one can find it; no one knows where it is, and I find myself obliged to fit up, with the help of three giggling maids and the sacrifice of the tapes out of two petticoats, the curtain belonging to my own camp equipment, so small that it lies like a veil against my face.

And this is so like these people. They could take infinite trouble over those wreaths and feel themselves utterly unable to grapple with that curtain—even if they knew where it was, which they don't.

Three days later the curtain is found, I myself spying it on a line at the far end of the back garden and going out to fetch it. It has stormed with rain for close upon twenty-four hours; but for one hour the sun has shone and the curtain is almost dry. Taking it off the line and wandering round the back veranda, seeking some safe place to finish it off in,—for the sky is as black as ink,—I come upon two of the maids ironing their own innumerable, brilliantly colored pongée silk dresses.

A large ironing-sheet and blanket are spread upon the floor, where they sit in their chemises with their legs stretched very far apart, ironing between them. There is a great deal of giggling

when I come upon them with the curtain, of which they deny any knowledge whatever. But in this island the girls are always giggling, the older women gazing out to sea, deeply melancholy.

There is one elderly looking woman, though goodness knows she may not be more than five and twenty. She appears to live on the veranda of the house next door, and she greatly intrigues me. For whatever time in the morning I happen to look out,—and it has been as early as four,—I see the outline of her face and figure by moonlight or in the gray dawn, with her chin propped in her hand, gazing out to sea in the precise attitude of the Minotaur in Watts's haunting picture. Now, while I write, there is a man upon the bench across the road, gazing, gazing with precisely the same air of desperate resignation, far and away beyond despair. I wonder what it is that, without hope, they long for. It may be some sort of subconscious yearning for the land from which their race once came; or it may be that they are forever trying to follow with their eyes those sailing-ships which come and go above the horizon, bearing away, away their loved ones.

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CHAPTER VIII

IT is Sunday and we are picnicking in the country. I got up at half-past six o'clock, as we were supposed to start at seven. But innumerable difficulties intervened, so that it was close upon ten before we got away; actually past nine before the giver of the picnic—a Russian with an air of inviolate melancholy, who buys many bad pearls in the hope of finding one good one—comes out of the bath-room, which smells intoxicatingly sweet with festive wreaths made overnight and hung there to keep fresh in the spray from the shower-bath. Johnny emerges from the kitchen, where upheld by unlimited supplies of planter's punch he has been wrestling throughout the entire night with the preparation of a multitude of dishes. Not that it matters when we start, for the morning is still of a heavenly freshness, and there is always, here in Tahiti, an amplitude of what Charles Lamb called "estates in time."

Now, hung with thick wreaths, we lounge under the palms upon a little point between the mouth

of the river and the sea, in a bay some six miles out from the town, with immense curving waves and sheets of white foam. Here the water is narrowed to a mere strip between this island and Moorea, with the full force of the Pacific waves rushing into it.

Our party consists of seven: our Russian host, an Englishman, a young American, Johnny Paree, his sister and his niece,—an exquisite slender creature of fifteen with a dreamy, far-away look in her eyes,—and myself.

The fire is lighted among the cooking-stones, for the breadfruit; the ground spread with white woven mats for us to lie upon; an enamel-like stretch of shining banana leaves laid as a tablecloth.

We are all smoking, as one must to keep away the mosquitos. In front of us is an immense green glass demijohn of punch—rum and ice and soda-water, with all the glowing fruits of the Goblin Market floating within it—forming, as the sun shines through it, a centerpiece worthy of the banquet of gods.

At the mouth of the river two men in scarlet-and-white *paréus* stand fishing. On the opposite side of the river are groups of young men and women. The men are in scarlet *paréus* and white

shirts, for only the middle-aged men are supposed to wear yellow and red, and there are none of these in Tahiti, where one childhood slips into another. They are beautiful as bronze statues. The women, in white, their long flowing hair decked with flowers, are playing the guitar and singing together. The air is like the scented petal of a sun-baked blossom against one's cheek, at once warm and cool, and there is no wind whatever.

Johnny Paree is mixing the salad of raw fish—which has been soaking in vinegar, amid peppercorns and spices, for twenty-four hours—with every kind of delicately shredded vegetable and a sauce made of cocoanut cream and lime-juice and gin and salt. The young American, attired in a white shirt and scarlet *paréu*, resembling some strange bird with his long-pointed beak-like nose and dark-rimmed glasses, sits upright upon a stone and sings to us as we drink the punch out of long tumblers.

The *déjeuner* is ushered in with Martini cocktails, also in tumblers: then comes raw fish—of which the sauce is so delicious that we all finish it by lapping, for there are no spoons, no knives and forks—steaming hot breadfruit as mealy as the best Irish potatoes, cold chicken, tender young

pork with stuffing, and Russian salad. With all this is white wine, followed by a great deal of champagne, for which no one seems in the very least the worse.

The natives upon the opposite side of the river dive into the water; not as we dive, but jumping, and alighting sitting. They swim out into the sea, breast the waves, shouting and singing, and are driven back into the shore by a great sweep of surf. All our party, excepting the Englishman and me, jump up from the immense meal with cries of delight, run behind the bushes to get into their bathing-clothes, then into the sea.

I lie upon a white woven mat in the shade and try to sleep. But it is too hot; besides, I am too happy, too well entertained watching the bathers. The Englishman, however, draws apart and really does sleep, with a handkerchief over his face. After a while a little black pig goes and lies down at his side, snuggles against him, and sleeps also.

It is a good two hours before our friends come out of the water, get into their clothes, and move away to a bungalow a little back in the bush, from which, after a while, the long-drawn notes of the "Boatman on the Volga" played by the gramophone, come to me. I sit alone on the sands, my knees clasped in my arms, and gaze across the

narrow strip of sea toward Moorea, incomparably beautiful, done out in shades of amethyst against a pale-gold sky.

The Russian joins me; he talks of his own early life, his own tragic country, the beauty of everything in Tahiti, and weeps. But after a little while he moves off to the bungalow, and when I follow him later, through the scented dusk hung with fireflies, I find him dancing to the strains of the gramophone, with a rapt and passionate air, clasping in his arms a Chilian lady, the wife of the owner of the bungalow. Her hair, which flows loose, reaching below her waist, is still dripping with sea-water, from her swim.

A Czecho Slav, who is of the party, comes and sits on a little sofa by me, and we talk together in villainously bad French, the only two of the party who are not dancing. An hour or so later we drive back to Johnny's along roads which are intoxicatingly sweet with the heavy scent white datura gives off after sunset; and when we get back, far too tired to start out again to dinner, cajole our host into feeding us in the kitchen, dimly illuminated with three candles which cast a wind-blown light across our faces, leaving the rest of the queer, untidy place, umber-brown and black with smoke, deep in shadow.

I had fully made up my mind to go from Tahiti to Samoa and the Tongan Islands by schooner; had created the actual schooner in my own mind, before I left London. The people here, however, tell me that it is out of the question; that never, never in the whole history of the island has there been any schooner taking that route.

I do not altogether feel that I am beaten; but as an alternative I think that I may go to Cook Island. Hearing that there is a schooner laid up on the island, being fitted with a new boom, and that she is shortly going on there, I have this morning been out to see her. Such is the languor of the place that, though she lies in a little back-water less than half a mile away, I cannot bring myself to walk there; I must hire a motor, for which I am charged an altogether exorbitant sum.

To board the schooner I had to walk one of the longest planks I had ever crossed, and even when I got there my errand seemed in vain. She is very trim and neat, and is in charge of a friendly Danish captain, but there are only two berths on board and those are in the saloon. Though both of these are taken, the captain seemed to think there was a chance that one of them might be given up at the last moment, but when one has sampled the heat of that saloon and remembers the

constant relay of meals on any boat, the trip does not strike one as altogether inviting.

Ten days ago I went into a Chinaman's shop to buy a camphor-wood chest into which to put the few warm clothes which I am keeping for the homeward journey; for it is a weariness to the flesh to have them in the same boxes with my light tropical things.

These camphor-wood boxes smell delicious, and so do the clothes which are kept in them, free from all danger of moth. My chest is three feet long by about a foot and a half broad, and the same depth. It is clasped with brass, with a brass lock, and is, I fully believe, going to be the pride of my life.

The Chinaman from whom I bought the box is round like a globe-fish and sleek as a cat. He was very anxious that I should buy a pearl instead of a box, feeling very certain, I should imagine, that even with the pearl I should still find myself unable to do without the box. The pearl did, indeed, look a far more tempting trifle for immediate purchase, lying upon a scrap of black cloth in the palm of my hand. I have been to the shop several times since, once to buy a pair of straw shoes for the bath-room, and once to buy a little

bowl out of which to drink my tea. I intended to get one bowl only, but this the Chinaman would not have, declaring that nobody ever could, or ever would, drink tea without company, and forced me to take two.

When I got home I discovered that one of the bowls was cracked and I had to go back next day to change it, as I believe he fully intended that I should do; whereupon the pearl was once again pressed upon me, at a greatly reduced price.



Holding the pearl upon his finger

To-day I walked very slowly past the shop, for I must say that pearl draws me, so that I find my footsteps continually turning in that direction. Seeing me as he stood peering out of his dark shop, the proprietor beckoned me in, looking very sleek and sly; and when I got up to the counter he was

behind it, holding the pearl upon his finger, as though it were set in a ring.

I took it from him and he made a pretense of hunting for the little piece of black material upon which to show it off, apparently distracted when he could not find it. As it happened, I had in my bag a powder-puff with a black satin cover. I laid the pearl upon this and walked to the door so as to catch the light, returning at once in a great rage.

"It 's not the same pearl," I said.

His eyes met mine blankly for a moment; then he smiled very sweetly, and, curiously enough, with the greatest satisfaction, really liking me for having found him out. Unlocking a drawer, he took out what I called my pearl, twisted in a tiny screw of newspaper. It seemed to me, however, that I had found some basis for refusing to buy it, bolstering up my strength of mind, and with great dignity I walked out of the shop, declaring that I should never come near it again. Yet I know in my own heart that this particular Chinaman and I shall go on playing the same game for so long as I remain in Papeete.

There are dozens and dozens of Chinese shops here, the most intriguing of all being those of the Chinese druggists.

To-night I have dined in the largest and most important of the Chinese restaurants. The whole of the ground-floor is a store, while above this is one large room, one smaller room,—which pretends to be set apart for white people,—and a few little semi-private rooms like bathing-boxes, with muslin curtains across the empty doorways, and a veranda set with tables.

It is Saturday and the whole place was crowded with people, many of whom had evidently come in from the country, for they all were crowned with fresh flowers. A few children lay on the floor at their parents' feet, sleeping. There were men of every color there. No collars were worn even by the white men, while one—an Englishman, I found out later—was in nothing more than a bathing-dress and a very great deal of tattoo. The noise was terrific: if shouting failed to bring a Chinaman, or one of his Tahitian waitresses, the people took up their chairs and banged them on the floor, while all the time an agonizing admixture of many different tunes was strummed upon innumerable guitars, and concertinas mingled with the sounds of a gramophone braying out jazz music—or so-called music.

The Tahitian waitresses, with their flowing hair, moved superbly, and altogether aloof, bear-

ing their heavy trays in front of them. All the ladies of the town were there. There was one, very ugly and badly dressed, but with such an air, such a beckoning assurance that every man in the place turned to look at her as she walked down the room with her breasts thrust out, her shoulders squeezed up high and tight, swinging her hips in the way in which they all do.

I had a chop-suey of shredded chicken with shrimps, and shredded vegetables and red pepper—an immense heaped plate of it served with a bowl of rice and a doll's saucer of piquant sauce, and China tea to follow.

Coming back along the waterside I found a great number of little schooners and ketches anchored there, pulling at their ropes with a soft whimper, for the tide was going out, endeavoring to draw them with it.

In the stern of one boat some one was playing a guitar and men and women were singing. This serenade was broken into by the most appalling, long-drawn shrieks as I passed the bows, growing louder and louder, more and more piercing, until they ended in one long, horrid gurgle. A sound which made it plain to the meanest imagination that a little pig—and all boats carry them, running about the deck—was being killed for the Sunday

dinner, while, likely enough, one of the swains chanting such melodious love-songs was himself doing the job, without so much as turning a hair over it.

CHAPTER IX

THIS morning I came out to stay at Taravao with Maou-u and his family. An artist from Papeete arrived at the same time, and wanted to be put up, greatly embarrassing Maou-u, for he had promised the guest-house to me. Being, however, fundamentally unable to refuse anything to any one, he ended by giving the artist a bed in his own house,—one immense room like a dormitory, with eight beds set with snowy sheets and mosquito curtains, where he and his wife and three children, and the two maids of honor sleep; for by Tahitians it would be considered altogether gross and “uneducated” for any two people, even a husband and wife, to share a bed. All the meals were taken on the veranda outside, the cooking done over a fire, or, best of all, in a hole in the ground among hot stones, a little distance away.

The artist is to have his meals with me on my veranda. I do not greatly care for the look of him; still, it can't be helped, and I am too altogether full of contentment to be easily put out by anything.

I lay down in the guest-house after *déjeuner*, but I did not sleep. In reality I was too happy to sleep. A tiny, pale, gold-skinned boy came and squatted on his hunkers on the floor, gazing up at me as I lay upon my bed. He fitted in with the general scheme of coloring, for the walls of the guest-house are made of a basketwork of fine, split, goldy-tinted bamboo, and there is a high-peaked roof of plaited palm-leaves bleached to a pale biscuit tint. There are three windows and three very wide doorways. From one of these doorways you look down up the inland lagoon and the causeway; from another upon the great sweep of bay with its islands; the third gives into the garden with its pink and scarlet and rose cannas, crimson and yellow crotons, multi-tinted zinnias, roses and palms. Every scene, hung like a magic curtain across the doors and windows, is so altogether beautiful that upon whichever side I turn I find myself unable to keep my eyes shut.

At five o'clock this evening Maou-u's wife, the two girls, the three children and I go down to bathe in the river a quarter of a mile away, while Maou-u himself follows us later.

We make our way along the road for a little, then turn off through deep bush to a bend where



Photo. W. Crane, Tahiti

THE LAGOON



Photo. W. Crane, Tahiti

THE LAGOON

the river flows, swiftly swirling, beneath a high bank overhung with trees, whose long roots hang like snakes down to the water's edge.

The three children climb up into the trees, a height full forty feet above the water, and dive, dropping in a sitting position, crossing their legs as they touch it. Armani, aged nine; Spole, aged seven; and Charlie, only four but tall as a child of six. Both the little girls have long, flowing straight hair, and it is delightful to see them swimming—racing beneath the water, like small fishes, their hair streaming out beside them like fine, elongated, semi-transparent fins. They are totally without fear, though the water is at least ten feet deep. All three children are swift and supple, finely made and fair as golden shadows, for their mother has Alsatian blood and is a beautiful woman with blue-gray eyes.

Maou-u joins his children in the deep water, but we four women go on farther to a place where there is a beach of round pebbles. Maou-u's wife does not bathe, as there is another baby on its way, but the rest of us go into the water in our petticoats. Following the directions of the others, I have brought a cake of soap, a clean dress, and a princess petticoat with me. I bathe in the petticoat I have on; then when I come out of the water

I put on my fresh things and wash those that I have been wearing, as do the other women. And this, it seems, is the rule of the day,—to change your clothes twice and bathe twice,—then at night to bathe your feet the last thing before getting into bed.

The three children come running up, and, seeing that I have not yet finished dressing, immediately turn their backs, sitting like three small gold-tinted statues motionless upon the stones at the edge of the water until I am once more presentable.

It is only five in the morning, but I could sleep no longer and am sitting on my veranda, waiting for the sunrise, which begins with a silver-gilt diffusion of light over the entire scene. The fish are once more leaping high in the inner and outer lagoons, as I could hear them doing up to twelve o'clock last night. I see Marcaline's figure out upon the causeway and she calls to me, her hands rounded to her mouth, telling me that the sun is about to rise. From the exultation and joy in her voice one might think that such a thing had never happened before. By the time I join her, the outer and inner lagoons are like sheets of gold with crimson roses reflected upon them; the mountains at the back glow with purple and gilt, while

in a cleft of the mountains to the right of us the sun comes up, as it seems, with a rush.

Already the children are bathing in the inner lagoon, laughing and shouting, splashing golden drops around them; they bring a small fish to show to me, flat and broad and of the color of brilliant blue enamel shot with violet. For a few minutes they play about around me, then run back into the water, catching fish in their hands and throwing them up to their two pet frigate-birds, which swoop and swirl above them, mount so high that they are lost to sight, then swoop down again.

I am wearing nothing more than my nightgown and the thinnest of kimonos, but I paddle down to the edge of the water and join the children, watching them with delight as they gaze upward, throwing the fish as high as they can, calling out the names of their birds in long-drawn syllables: "Chacco-o! Chacco-o! Chacco-o! T-i-t-i! T-i-t-i! T-i-t-i," perfectly sure as to which is which, while they are so far overhead that I myself am unable to see them.

The children have in general lovely manners: never once since that first afternoon, when Charlie came and sat upon my floor and gazed at me, have they come near me or into the garden when I might be dressing or resting. Directly I begin to

eat, they move away, however absorbed they may be in their games upon my veranda, and if, when we are out walking, I stop to speak to any one, they walk out of ear-shot at once. All alike, however, detest the artist, whom Marcaline and the other native girls call "Mam'selle." Spole has two French words, "*savez*" and "*no savez*," though there is little enough that she does not know,—the native names and habits of all the birds and fish, flowers, and trees, being perfectly familiar to her,—while her English consists of "good" and "no good," into which she throws a wealth of meaning. Thus when she speaks of the artist she wrinkles up her minute nose until it is nothing more than a series of creases upon her small thin face, turns down her thumb, and with the greatest disgust ejaculates, "No good!"

He is, indeed, exasperating. This morning he had his "little breakfast" on my veranda with me,—coffee, fresh cocoanut cream, bananas, and oranges still gleaming with dew,—and all the while he grumbled and peeved, declaring that he had lost a silver spoon which he had brought with him; that he had been unable to sleep because of the snoring of his host, the coughing and fidgeting of children; that the cocks and hens awoke him at dawn; that he would be sure to get elephantiasis,

sleeping among natives. All this in face of Maou-u's wonderful hospitality disgusted me so, spoiled my early morning blaze of joy to such an extent that I am glad now to be out in the canoe with the children and Maou-u's best boy to paddle us. For the winds get up so suddenly here that it is not safe to venture far without some one with a strong arm, and we have set our hearts upon getting out to the reef.

The canoe is so narrow that only the smallest child can really sit *in* it: others must perch upon a little board laid across it, or overstride it like a horse. The children hop in as light as birds, but for me, a trifle lame as I am, it is more difficult. Spole, for all her seven years no bigger than Charlie at four, is as careful of me as though I were a child, supporting me with her minute, wiry person, absorbedly anxious.

I sit cross-legged over the narrow canoe, scribbling upon my knee, wearing nothing more than a cotton dress and petticoat, with a bath towel hung over my shoulders to keep off the sun. If I held up a parasol we should certainly go over, and I am, indeed, growing so used to this bath-towel arrangement that when I leave it off I shall feel as naked as one does when, in London, one makes one's first appearance without a fur. For

coolness nothing could be better, as I dip it constantly into the sea, wring it out very slightly, and sit with the drops from it trickling down my spine.

The water is as clear as glass. In some places it is so shallow that the children jump in and out of the canoe and push it in front of them. As we near the reef they sit perfectly still, for here the sea is full of currents, dangerous, and deep. Below us are gardens of coral and trees of coral, of every shade of pink and pale mushroom; great flat tables of coral and fairy fine forests of seaweed, green and rose at the bottom of it, shot through and through with small brilliant blue fish.

The frigate-birds, which have followed us out, whirl and plane overhead with a sound like weeping; a sound so penetrating that it pierces the roar of the waves, which arch their great necks above us at the farther side of the reef, dropping in a mass of foam upon it, racing toward us in deep, greedy ripples which rock the canoe violently from side to side.

It is seven o'clock by now, and so hot that we put back toward the shore. After landing the boy, who is anxious to be back at his work, the children take me in at the mouth of the river and on up it. The trees on each side are immense, dark, sullen, and threatening, as is so much tropi-

cal vegetation. Here are tall and slender mapau trees, with their extraordinary flange-like roots, and trees of a heavier build with large, round, brilliantly green leaves, thick as metal, which the children call *hotu*. From all alike hang long beards of lichen and a brilliant green parasite like bunches of long satin ribbons; while some of the trees are so thick with the ferns that it is impossible to tell which is fern and which is tree.

The frigate-birds, overcome by boredom as we turn in among the trees, where they can no longer display their swooping, leave us and go back to the shore, where, too lazy to catch fish for themselves, they will, supposing no one goes out in the canoes, sit mewling and complaining throughout the entire day. In their place, however, clouds of shining white birds the size of pigeons, only more lightly built and with fine curved wings, hover round us with a loud fretful cry. "*E-t-a-t-ae*," the children call to them, and I write it as they say it, every letter separate and distinct.

There is another bird, half as large again as a thrush, pale greenish brown, and very slender, with a long curved bill like that of a hummingbird, the smooth aristocratic air of a person whose clothes are very beautifully made by the best tailor. This the children seem to call "*a-u-u*," with the *a*

wide as in the Italian; but then again, or so it seems to me,—though I cannot be sure that it is the same bird,—they call to it as “*Au-ta-a*,” “*Au-ta-a*.”

In parts of the river there are deep pools, black, without a ripple; in others the water eddies over such shallows that the canoe can scarcely pass, and the children jump in and out of it, pushing it, chasing the fish. There are cries of “*Pou-e-e! pou-e-e!*” and they tumble out in such haste after an eel, which they fail to catch, that both paddles go with them, are recaptured with difficulty, much laughing and shouting.

I should like to draw the mapau trees with their sinister and fleshly roots; but the mosquitos settle upon my hands so thickly that it is impossible; while both my hands and ankles are already so swollen out of shape that we are driven into the open.

Coming out of the mouth of the river, caught by the wind, the canoe swings atop of the water so airily that it seems that it might take wing and sweep upward to join the frigate-birds which have come out to meet us, bitterly complaining. I, who cannot swim at all, find it difficult to take it as gaily as the children, who are like fish in the water.

Mam'selle grows to be a more and more unmitigated nuisance; throughout the whole of dinner this evening he has grumbled. When Marcaline says, at the end, in her pretty way: "I hope the dinner was good?"—the dinner, mind you, for which Maou-u would never accept so much as a penny—he snaps out, "The coffee is cold."

To escape from him and the mosquitos I go out in the canoe with the children. Armani, who is all moods, is in a fit of the blues, and the other two, who love teasing—as all these people do—torment her so that she at last retreats to the extreme stern; sits there with her back turned to us, her fingers in her ears.

We go a long way up the coast by innumerable bays, past innumerable islets. The hills are black, the water shining like mother-of-pearl in the moonlight. And all the time we are out, when they are not baiting Armani, the two younger children sing to me in their soft treble voices.

When we get back to the causeway Maou-u calls for me to come up to the house and hear his gramophone, playing songs and airs from the grand operas, which he passionately loves. The whole party is sitting under the palm-leaf lean-to, which takes the place of dining- and sitting-room.

Marcaline has a new pale-pink flounced muslin dress and patent-leather shoes, which she very soon kicks off. She appears to have quite forgotten the irritation aroused by Mam'selle and must be dreaming of love, aching with love, from the look of her, the expression in her face, as she sits with her chin upon her clasped hands, gazing out to sea.

Maou-u takes Spole on his knee and presses his cheek to hers. Of the three children, both he and his wife have always seemed fondest of this small pale and spiritual creature; now to my surprise I hear her speak of "My real papa," and find that Maou-u is, indeed, no more than the "papa who gives me bread." For these people have strange ways with children. They look upon it as a sort of grossness to be overfond of their own, differentiating between them and others. They are, indeed, equally fond of all children, treating them with a passionate tenderness. If a woman is expecting a child and a friend begs that she may have it when it is born, she will not be refused and another child is taken in its place; so there may be in one family many children of different parentage, though it is impossible to tell the difference between them.

Mam'selle has been upsetting Maou-u's wife so,

and she in a state of health where she must not be upset, that Maou-u came to me this morning and asked whether his bed could be put on my veranda. It is an intolerable nuisance, but how was it possible to say no when Maou-u's own hospitality is unbounded? Fortunately, when I get back to my house this evening, though it is no more than nine o'clock, he is fast asleep under a mosquito curtain which I had in my pack and lent to him. There is no other place for his bed save directly against the openwork bamboo wall, at the other side of which stands my washing-stand, and I am rather afraid that he may awake while I am performing my ablutions. Fortunately, however, despite his assertions of insomnia, he sleeps on, even snores; and after all, come to think of it, it does n't greatly matter one way or another, seeing that he is a landscape and not a figure painter. But—Heavens!—what a setting for a romance! Never, never, or so it seems, were Browning's wonderful words: "Never the time and the place and the loved one altogether," more apt.

The end has come. At his "little breakfast" this morning, the artist was in an altogether intolerable humor, and the veranda was a disgusting sight with his unmade bed and all his untidy be-

longings. I was the offender this time—I under whose mosquito curtain he snored, and snored. I had disturbed him with my fidgeting. My temper broke and I turned upon him, bidding him, “For God’s sake, shut up!” and informing him that, as I had come there for rest and quiet and not to be bothered by anybody, I should be glad if he would stop complaining.

Upon this he turned on me like a cat, hissing and screaming, stuttering with rage. “You damned civilized women ought n’t to be allowed in the place, spoiling everything!” he cried, at which I laughed, for it was really too funny in the face of all his fussing, his silver spoon, his nerves. As to my civilization, what was there to be said for it, considering my costume, a rough-dried dress, my bath-towel over my shoulders, my hair in a plait?

“That’s good! that’s very good!” I said. “‘Civilized’ from a man whom every native girl in the island knows as ‘Mam’selle.’” An answer which did nothing whatever to turn away his wrath, for he rushed off down the garden and across the road to Maou-u’s house, where I heard him shrieking curses, declaring that he would no longer take his meals with “that damned woman.”

Of course, this was the end of it, for Maou-u was furious, declaring that he would not have the

creature in his house, though he himself was too much of a gentleman to send him off in the heat of the day. Thus, all this morning, while the children and I have been paddling around the shallows, in the canoe, we have seen him sulking under the trees where he was ultimately given his *déjeuner*,—"with the dogs," as Maou-u put it, adding, "A cannibal have better manners,"—lying down there to rest until the motor-lorry which takes bananas, sugar-cane, vegetables, and passengers to Papeete each day came past.

Now he is safely off the premises and we all go down to bathe together with a new sense of peace in our hearts. It is, indeed, almost worth having had him here to realize the relief of his going: the old game of the swings and the roundabouts.

It is after eight and we are all sitting upon the edge of the causeway, with dangling feet, while Maou-u plays very softly upon his concertina. The after-sunset sky is the color of honey; the moon is honey-like; so is the sweetness of the air. Four more days remain to me out here—four entire days and four nights bland with sweetness and pure air: hours like honey distilled drop by drop.

Heaven be thanked that I am old enough to

realize what happiness is, a gift denied to youth; to savor the rareness of it, to miss nothing, to blur nothing. I am happy now; and throughout four more days and nights I intend to be happy, for no letter can reach me, and whatever may come later I shall have had this: a joy free from rivalry and striving, the fever of love, the strain of triumph; hours like the song of a bird in my heart.

CHAPTER X

THE little schooner for Cook Island has departed without me, no single one of the passengers having changed his mind or been translated to a better world, as I so fondly hoped. And yet I don't know that I have felt altogether disappointed, for, at the back of my mind, I have been conscious of a fear that in changing my plans I might be upsetting the decrees of that fate which forever makes difficult things easy, and easy things difficult, to me; so that, if I set my heart upon anything which seems well-nigh impossible, I usually get what I want. It is, indeed, the commonplace, the ordinary, the everyday sort of luck which fails to flow my way, and to such an extent that there has never been any real sequence in my life.

Upon a map in Fleet Street I planned out my voyage among the Pacific isles and onward round the world, as confidently as though it were the littlest cross-country journey in England, though if it had been that, everything would have gone wrong and I should have missed every connection

that it was possible to miss. I picked it off with the point of a hat-pin,—“I ’ll go there, and there, and there,”—embarking in spirit upon a journey of hundreds upon hundreds of miles, among islands which seemed to me, in my ignorance, as easy to dodge about among as the close-set hamlets of an English county. I planned it all quite regardless of distance, the difficulties of connections; the truth being that, if I am perfectly determined to do anything, I dare not look too closely into it.

What I said was: “I ’ll go by cargo-steamer as far as Tahiti; then I ’ll pick up a schooner of some sort and make my way to Samoa and Fiji.”

I reiterated my intention during the voyage, and people who knew the Pacific laughed at me as a maniac.

“Why, there ’s no schooner going that way once in four years, so you had better put that idea out of your head, once and for all,” was what they said.

All the same, I persisted stubbornly in face of their careful explanation—the sort of explanation which one does give to an idiot—that the only possible course for me would be to take the New Zealand Shipping Company’s mail-steamer to Wellington; train from Wellington to Auckland,

and try there for another steamer to Fiji; though it was more than likely, or so they said, that I should be obliged to go over to Sydney to get one.

Only look at the map, and imagine what I should have felt had I taken this seriously; the time, the money involved. But I simply could not take it seriously. It was like an inoculation which has no effect whatever upon one.

"Oh, but I must be able to pick up something," was what I said, and stuck to it, adding: "Anyhow, I'll give myself six weeks in Tahiti, and if I don't hear of something by that time I may begin to think about the mail."

Now, however, I have met with an amazing bit of good fortune, and my belief in the easy attainment of the apparently unattainable is justified, for when I arrived back from Maou-u's I found a four-masted schooner lying up against the wharf.

Upon inquiring about this schooner, however, I was told very definitely that she was bound for Noumea and never took any passengers. That seemed the end. Not that I was balked by the idea of any one really standing out against passengers, but that I did not greatly care for anything I had heard about New Caledonia.

Nevertheless during the week that followed I found myself constantly loitering upon the wharf,

staring at the schooner with that longing, that pulling at my heartstrings, which sailing-ships of almost any kind bring to me.

She had the air of a boat that is run for nothing but business. Battered by storms, bedraggled by three months at sea, she had not so much as a single inch of clean paint or unruined iron about her. Despite the fact that she was sailing under the flag of the Panama Republic, for the single reason that she was carrying such a cargo, stored in such a way, as no other country would have tolerated, she hailed from San Francisco. Her holds were crammed with gasoline and dynamite, the decks packed so high with timber that one could walk level from the poop-deck to the fo'c'sle head. A queer build of boat, altogether, for I was used to schooners with flush decks, fore and aft.

Still I was drawn to her, so drawn that I questioned every one I came across. And yet I could hear nothing. There seemed something elusive about her. The captain and officers must have come and gone in the town, but I could never get hold of them, and though some of the crew, for the most part Loyalty Island boys, were in the Port Restaurant almost every evening, they were usually fighting drunk. And that is what the

Loyalty Islanders are like. There are no better workers at sea, but once they get on shore with liquor in their heads, and the evil tempers of shores raging in their hearts, they are ill to meet.

Now, this morning, when I came down to *petit déjeuner* at seven, some one told me that the schooner had moved away from the quay to make room for another vessel, and that she was sailing to-day, touching at Samoa and Fiji before she went on to New Caledonia.

At this I was off like an arrow from a bow. Racing upstairs to get my hat and put on some shoes—for at Johnny's one breakfasts barefooted—I made for the port.

Looking in at the first Chinaman's store I passed,—for the Chinamen always know everything,—I found out what company the schooner was consigned to, and raced on there. By this time it was after seven, and the sun seemed to be literally shooting up into the heavens. Every moment it grew hotter; my clothes melted around me, and it was a long walk. When at last I arrived at the offices of the company I had been told of, I found that it was true that the *Monterey* was leaving that same day, at twelve o'clock, I was informed, bound not only for Fiji and Samoa, but for the Friendly Islands also, which

made me keener than ever; more absolutely determined to force fate.

There was, however, or so it was said, no sort of accommodation for passengers. When I persisted, declaring that I was no sort of a passenger, as passengers were generally understood, the head of the company—who had come into the outer office to see what was afoot—shrugged his shoulders. Of course the skipper could take me if he wished, the company had nothing whatever to do with a matter of this sort; he was a perfectly free agent, part owner, they believed, and they themselves were merely acting as the consignees for so much of the cargo as was being unloaded in Tahiti.

The best thing I could do was to go and see the skipper myself, he added, and very obligingly sent a clerk to show me the way to the new anchorage.

I found the schooner swinging out in the stream so as to allow room for the stern of an American tourist boat, fattened with Philistines, and hailed her.

A negro came up onto the fo'c'sle head and I asked if the captain was aboard, but was told that he had gone ashore ten minutes before. I had an idea that I might find him at the Port Restaurant, but I was just three minutes too late there. I then

inquired at the nearest stores, and in two of them found that he had been just before me. It was, indeed, like following a leaf upon a stream of running water, and every moment I grew hotter and hotter, more and more fiercely determined.

At last I harked back to the company's offices, where, to my surprise,—for the chase had gone on so long that any end to it seemed impossible, the whole affair had the texture of a dream,—a clerk whom I met crossing the yard pointed to a man talking to two others in white and said:

“Why, that 's the skipper of the *Monterey*; he has just this moment come up here.”

I went up and stood by the three of them. It was not good manners, but when you want anything very badly you don't seem to care for manners.

The two tall, heavily built men in white sun-helmets, drooping a little from the tropics, stood with their backs to me. But the captain was facing me: a small wiry, gray-haired man in a gray suit, with a straw hat a little on one side; a small gray moustache; very square shoulders, a look of great activity, and the most intelligent, the clearest and cleverest, the most sympathetic and mirthful hazel eyes that I have ever seen. These eyes met mine and we stared straight at each other, into

each other, while the conviction that we were to be shipmates came to me.

Still they went on talking. When they came to a pause, however, it was to him alone I spoke—straight out, with no idea whatever of an introduction:

“Captain, I want you to let me have a passage on your schooner to—” I was going to say Samoa, but my mind leapt on to—“Samoa and the Friendly Islands.”

With his bright gaze still full upon me, smiling, showing a set of the very whitest teeth imaginable, he answered, and I was sure it was with reluctance:

“I am sorry, but it is quite impossible. You see, we have no sort of accommodation for passengers.”

The words sounded definite enough; but I persisted:

“I am not an ordinary passenger; I am used to all sorts of boats. I don’t want a cabin, I can sleep on deck. I’ll sign on as one of the crew. I don’t care what I do; all I want is to get the passage.” I heard my own voice passionately eager, knew that what I was saying bit home.

For a little while longer we talked together; then the skipper said that he had things to see to; that

he would go back to his ship, find out whether anything could be arranged, and, returning to the office, telephone me at Johnny's, though, of course, there was very little time, for they were sailing at twelve.

I knew that I might be making a fatal mistake in letting him out of my sight, but there seemed nothing else for it.

Directly I was away from him my heart began to fail me. I was not so sure of the passage as I had been. Devastated by racing about in the heat of the day, I felt my will-power weakening, and, realizing this as fatal, as if to clinch it I forced fate—went straight to the bank and drew out all the money I had there; then to the post-office, where I ordered all my letters forwarded to Wellington, to await there further instructions. After this I went on to the Chinese laundry, where I paid my bill and took away my bundle of linen—fortunately washed and dried, though unironed—telling myself that now everything was in train I should certainly get my passage upon the schooner.

I then went back to Johnny's; tried to find Johnny to ask what he had been charging for my room. I met with no success, and began packing. By this time it was eleven o'clock, and my heart

was in my boots, though I could not have said why.

A quarter of an hour later the telephone-bell rang. When I answered it—with death in my heart—I found it was one of the clerks from the shipping-office, ringing up to tell me the captain had just been in and declared that it was quite impossible to take me.

At this I was mad, and so wound up that, feeling it would be impossible to stay on tamely where I was, I started off again, in all the dust and heat, to the far end of the town, to the offices of the representatives of the Phosphate Company of Makatea. There I took a ticket for a little tin-pot steamer leaving that afternoon; for it is only some eighteen hours' journey to the island of Makatea, and I thought I would stay there four or five days; then come back in hopes that something else would have turned up by that time.

On the way I ran into the captain of the schooner, and once again we looked each other very straight in the eyes.

"I am sorry you won't have me, Captain," I said, and, he answering that he was sorry too, we passed on our ways, with nothing more between us, for the heart was clean gone out of me.

On my way back from the Phosphate Com-

pany's offices I turned into the Port Restaurant for *déjeuner* and, finding there the Englishman who had come over on *El Kantara* with me, sat down at the same table and told him my troubles. This only made me feel worse, for he said it was the sort of chance that could come to any one only once in a lifetime. The two keepers of the restaurant added that it would be impossible for me to find a better skipper, comforting me but little by the declaration that they would miss me sorely if I went.

After a little while the captain himself came past the veranda where we were sitting and paused at my table.

"Oho! oho!" I thought; "you would not do that if you really wanted to be shut of me," and, introducing him to my friend, I remarked that if he would not take me on his schooner he might at least sit there and have a drink with me, which he did.

He would like to take me, he said, "like it fine," but there was no room whatever.

It was then twelve o'clock. The time of sailing for the schooner had been put off for two hours, so that it would leave at two, the same time as the steamer for Makatea, which I knew would be punctual.

By this time I was as excited as a gambler. I praised myself like a Cheap Jack, extravagantly and without shame: there was no sort of sea that I minded; I could cook; I could darn socks.

Coming down off the fo'c'sle head in the dark a couple of days earlier the captain had fallen into the small hatch at the bottom of the companion and broken three ribs. He told me about this, pathetically, like a child, with his hand upon his side; told me that there was nobody on board who so much as knew how to wind a bandage, and in this I seemed to find my chance. To hear me, you would have thought that there was nothing on earth that I could not do; that no ship, no hospital on earth, was complete without me.

By this time I was perfectly determined against Makatea, able to sit up and take some solid nourishment, in which the captain joined me. The upshot of the whole thing was the suggestion that I might, anyhow, come on board and see her; satisfy myself that there was no sort of room.

The two mates looked at me very wryly when I stepped on board. The very small amount of deck in any way clear was filthy.

"There is only one possible place where you could sleep," said the captain, and showed it to me: a tiny triangular store-room right in the

stern of the boat, stinking to heaven, terribly hot and literally heaving with cockroaches. Nothing on earth would have induced me to sleep there, but when the captain turned to me and said, "You see, it is perfectly impossible," I protested stoutly that, on the contrary, it would suit me very well. I thought the question of sleeping on deck might well be fought out later.

Up on deck again, we went over the whole thing afresh. I felt him giving in, and at last with a long-drawn sigh he capitulated—and for the quaintest of reasons.

"I suppose I'll have to take you, I see that—*have* to take you. I can't refuse you anything," he said; and added with a cock of his head, a long-drawn roll of his "r": "I'm just fair crazy about skinny women!"

That settled it. Still, for me to go as a passenger was against all regulations, and I must sign on as one of the crew—stewardess on a vessel where there never was, had been, never would be any other woman to attend to.

Within half an hour I had collected all my goods and chattels, bade an almost tearful farewell to Johnny and Johnny's, and got my luggage over to the schooner. I left my possessions heaped together on the poop-deck, met the captain at the

port office, and signed on—for a year, if it were so required of me.

I am now back on the schooner and part of her. I have got my deck-chair open and am sitting writing, feeling as completely at home as though I had never been anywhere else. There is auxiliary steam, and the engineer is trying to get the engines going, but without much success, as it seems, though every now and then a dense puff of smoke laden with soot belches forth from a tin chimney belonging to the donkey-engine, immediately above my head.

I write a little and sleep a little, write a little more and sleep a little more, thickly peppered over with smuts. Somebody brings me a mug of black coffee. There is still a great deal of coming and going of cargo: two o'clock, three o'clock, four o'clock pass, and there seems no prospect of getting away. Not that it matters in the least. Here I am, here I stay.

Seven o'clock. There is no wind, and as our engines refuse to do anything beyond smoking, a small tug comes and draws us out to a fresh anchorage between the Quarantine Island and the shore.

This little island is now a green black; Moorea,

an orchid-purple; the sea, a pale gold shot with purple. The tourist steamer lying against the wharf shows a hundred lights. There are scattered lights along the shore, among the trees, in the Port Café—infinately far removed, æons away from the time when I last took my *déjeuner* there.

Here, on board the schooner, the last meal of the day is over: pea-soup, meat and vegetables, and strong black coffee. As usual on this sort of boat no one at table spoke, unless to growl out some request. There are two Swedish mates, the elder stolid, fat, and middle-aged, the younger morose-looking until he smiles, when his whole deeply tanned face, his blue eyes, light up like a child's. There is also an American engineer who strikes me as being permanently dyspeptic, and very near permanently disgruntled by the ways of the strange contraption for which he is responsible. ;

Though it was still so early, daylight had gone from the little skylight atop of the saloon, and the hanging lamp was lighted. In the galley, which opens out of it, a blue-robed Chinaman hovered over gleaming copper pots, while another Chinaman waited at table.

The captain did not come down, for he is suffering so much from his broken ribs that the steep companionway causes him the intensest anguish.

He is, oddly enough, a Swiss, who since his boyhood has ranged up and down the West Coast of America, north and south. He has an engaging accent, half American, half French, and is amazingly like a bright-eyed bird, interested in everything. Even now, when his face is constantly twisted with pain, he is eager and alert; more alive than any man I have ever met. He tells me that he does not go down to his cabin at night, as he has been unable to lie down since his accident; sleeps as best he can sitting upright upon the tiny settee in the little wheel-house, or easing the pain by standing with his arms folded, almost level with his chin, atop of the locker. So, if I like, I can have his cabin until the store-room, in regard to which I am perfectly silent, can be cleared out.

I have been lying down, trying to sleep upon the captain's bunk, but it was so stiflingly hot with the single port-hole no larger than a soup-plate that I went up on deck at twelve. I found the captain, in the wheel-house, standing with his head down upon his arms. He was groaning a little, but the moment he heard me he glanced up with his indomitable smile.

The first mate was on watch and I sat for a long

time in my deck-chair, talking to him. The sky overhead was thick with stars and so clear that it seemed as though one looked through and through it, back and back into it, like a magic mirror or black pool; while the air on deck was delicately fresh, like young damp grass against one's face.

I went below again, and lay upon the bunk, spreading a grass mat upon it for coolness. But sleep was impossible, and coming up on deck again, I slept like the dead, rolled in a blanket on the bare deck, until close upon four o'clock, when I was awakened by the catting of the anchor.

I sat up, clasping my hands round my knees, and tipping back my head, fed upon the beauty of the Milky Way almost immediately above me.

There was in the air a delicious smell of freshly roasted coffee, and the second mate, who was on watch, fetched me a mug—for it was baking-day, when the Chinese boys are astir before two, making coffee and lighting the stove.

The air was delightful beyond words; the second mate and I smoked and talked of Sweden, where I was staying last summer. How odd life is! It came over me with a gust of mirth—the extreme oddness of its ups and downs. To think that I should be squatting on the deck of a soot-

black schooner in the Southern Pacific, smoking and drinking coffee, at an hour when most sane or insane people are tucked in their beds, in box-like rooms, inclosed in box-like houses more or less hermetically sealed until morning.

CHAPTER XI

ON board this boat one eats and drinks everything one ought not to—meat three times a day and lashings of black coffee. It does not seem that one is likely to sleep overmuch. Last night—the first night really at sea—I could not bear the thought of being below, and had a mattress on the poop-deck right against the stern rail. A long chair was rigged up for the captain to try if he could not lie down, half reclining.

We passed Raiatea at sunset. The sky was pale green with mists of cloud, the color of red-hot iron, above the island, which showed out in front of it as though perfectly flat, a uniform slate-gray with its many peaks. Just before darkness fell, the sky was barred with perpendicular bands of cloud above it, black and strangely menacing like prison bars.

In less than half an hour after I first lay down, the wind changed, and the spanker had to be shifted. I was awakened by the first mate, whose watch it was, and staggered into the wheel-house,

where I sat until they had finished, for the boom ran clean across the place where I was lying.

Through the open door I could see the dark figures of the half-naked men moving against a sky closely sifted over with stars—men who looked as primitive as though they were part of the Zodiac, working with and in among the constellations.

Venus is still upon our bows, as she was on the French boat. Back upon my mattress now, lying flat on my back, I can see the great spanker in front of me swinging against the Milky Way, which seems to flow around the truck of it, parting like water; while the whole heaven races to meet us, as we sway and dip, going westward; curtsying our way among the stars.

The next thing is that it begins to rain. The mate calls me, but I am more than half asleep, and snapping at him, "Go away," turn and tuck my head more deeply into my pillow. In another moment or so, however, the rain is falling in a solid sheet and I am driven to the wheel-house, where I sit drooping miserably, half dead with sleep. However, it is soon over, and the benevolent mate finds me a dry blanket and packs me up afresh.

The night seems endless, for we settled down at eight. I have had another move since the rain,

for the spanker has had to be shifted again, but even now it is barely midnight.

For the first time since I came on board, the captain is asleep, the sky is clear, and it really does seem as if we may at last be starting the night in earnest.

It is impossible to work on deck, for the wind catches my paper and the smuts smother me; while the two mates and the engineer take it in turns, during those rare moments when the captain is busy with something else, to talk to me. No one of them will speak a single word in front of the others. These men have, indeed, been so long at sea that, apart from the usual taciturnity of sailors, they are acutely on one another's nerves, can scarcely bear the sight of one another.

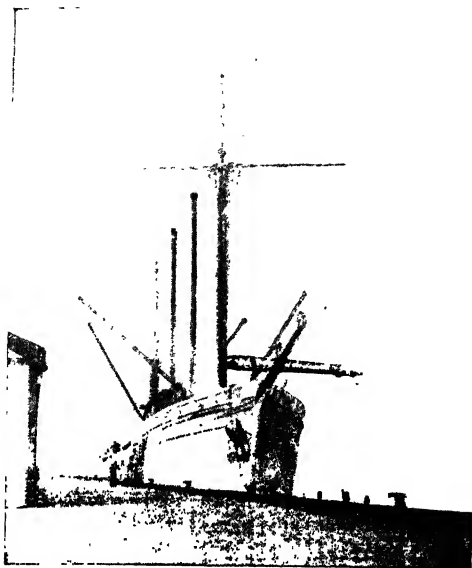
The engine is really a little devil. It never seems to do anything but rain down greasy soot,—though this in no way diminishes the hopes of all concerned that each day it will be better,—such soot that it is no good trying to wash one's face in the ordinary way, and one must take a nail-brush to do it. I have been just forty-eight hours on board and already my neck is raised up in large water-blisters from the sun, for there

are no awnings; while the backs of my arms are like raw beef.

All the same I am happy, and Heaven only knows why. Happy in a way that I am never happy in any other sort of place; for at sea, upon a boat like this, I have somehow or other the sensation of being at home among people who like me, whom I understand and who understand me. I am altogether in my own element, translated by my freedom from what most people call the ordinary life—to me so extraordinary that it misfits me like badly made clothes, stiff and ungainly, in which I never fail to feel an ass.

It is getting hotter and hotter. At breakfast this morning—and seven o'clock, mind you—it was 112 degrees Fahrenheit in the saloon. The sweat pours off us all in a constant, profuse stream, mingling with the soot; so that though I scrub all over every morning and again in the middle of the afternoon, put on everything fresh twice each day, I never feel clean. No one can eat, but the Chinese boys go on stolidly and indifferently cooking food and putting it before us.

After all, the heat and discomfort can be nothing to us in comparison with what it is to the captain, in constant pain as he is. There is abso-



THE SCHOONER "MONTEREY" SAILING UNDER
THE PANAMA FLAG



lutely no even moderately cool spot on deck except under the boom of the mainsail. There one may lie on the top of the timber and get the draft; but it is impossible for him to clamber across to it, and there is no place out of the sun where he can sit, excepting in the sweltering little wheel-house with the steersman, one or other of the Loyalty Island boys.

I found him asleep this afternoon with the sun from one of the windows blazing full upon his face. Getting a bit of curtain out of my pack, I hung one end to a hook in the wall and was near to bringing catastrophe upon us all—putting the entire magnetism of the ship out of gear—by driving in an iron nail to hold up the other. Thank Heaven, the captain opened one eye, just then, saw what I was doing, and let out a bellow such as I should never have thought him capable of.

About four o'clock this morning the captain came out of the wheel-house and advised me to shift myself, as the wind was about to change and I was likely to get a bucket of soot over me from the chimney of the donkey-engine. Stubborn and sleepy, however, I did no more than grunt, refusing to move, and in another hour was well paid out for my folly by feeling something like a thick

blanket over my face. Stumbling to my feet, rubbing my sleepy eyes, I found that I was deluged in soot.

Having moved my mattress and blankets to the leeward, though too late to be of much use, I crept through the wheel-house—for not for anything in the world would I have had the captain see me—and stumbled blindly down to the saloon, where the second mate was having coffee.

The expression upon his face as he saw me, his slow, “Gee-whiz but you have got it this time!” was enough. Going into the captain’s cabin, looking in the glass as best I could,—for I was more than half blinded,—I discovered that I was as black as though I had been cleaning a chimney with my head and hands.

The Chinese boy got me some hot water, while the mate held a mug of coffee to my lips and broke off some bread for me, for I could not touch anything. It took seven buckets of hot water and a whole pot of Selfridge’s best massage cream—and I would have given anything to have had the lovely young lady who served me with it see to what uses it was being put—to get me even moderately clean. I greased and scrubbed every inch of my body, and each fresh bucket of water was thick with scales of black.

Now, since breakfast, I have been busy washing my kimono, nightgown, and pillow-covers, with an accumulation of dresses and petticoats, for we are well off for soft water after the rain.

I sit upon a box on the poop-deck with a bucket between my knees and wash in true sailor fashion—for soldiers squat at their washing, rubbing it on a board on the ground or deck, while sailors sit and rub it between their hands. The first mate carries water for me and hangs out my clothes on a rope along the fo’c’sle head, and the captain wrings out my heavier gear, for my hands are so feeble with too much writing that I am a hopelessly bad wringer.

We are now in latitude forty-two south, longitude one hundred and fifty-nine, fifty-three west, and every afternoon for three or four days the same thing has happened. It grows suddenly and terribly hot, as though some inner oven of hell were opened upon us, and a dense gray cloud shoots up in the east, lying like a hand close pressed down above the horizon, which shows a vivid green line. At the same moment it seems as though another, and this time unseen, hand throws up a roll of carpet, the color of old lead, over the eastern edge of the world, with so much impetus that it rolls out and out, on and on for

miles, though it is no more than a bare half mile in width. The sea on each side of us remains the same pinkish mauve, for it is by now almost unmediately before sunset. Then, in another moment, with a slap as though some one above us has overturned an enormous bucket, the rain begins to fall, pouring down upon us in one solid sluice. The wind swings round with a wrench that shakes us from stem to stern, and all the sails have to be re-shifted.

There is a Frenchman on board, a sort of semi-passenger, on his way back to New Caledonia. He used to be mate of this ship before she was sold to the present owners, of whom the captain is one. We all dislike him intensely, for he has a way of behaving as though the schooner belonged to him, coming in and out of the wheel-house and glancing at the charts and sailing directions. There is also one Englishman, who is supposed to help with the engine, and of whom I am not particularly proud; and a Russian among the otherwise entirely native crew. Everybody is quarrelling; each in turn comes to me with some complaint or other, and when I look at the log I cannot wonder; for the boat has been over three months out, was two months later than she should have been in reaching Tahiti. Throughout the entire voy-

age one thing after another has gone wrong. She had, indeed, to put back to San Francisco, ten days after she left, for some repairs or other.

There are continual rains now and it is very difficult to work. At this moment the first mate and I are cheek by jowl on two upturned soap-boxes at the chart-table in the wheel-house, I typing and he working out his calculations. The captain, who seems to have been in less pain the last couple of days, is propped up on the little settee, deep in my copy of "Moby Dick," with his feet upon another soap-box. (For we each have a soap-box of our own, about which we are very fussy.) An immense and gravely absorbed Loyalty Island boy stands at the wheel, dressed in his red *paréu*. All this in a place smaller than the smallest bath-room.

I begin to think that the officers would be better if they had a little more variety in the way of food, and have started making them blanc-manges, treacle tarts, etc., as a sort of treat, though it is too grilling in the galley to attempt to remain there long at a time.

CHAPTER XII

THERE are some places, as there are some people, which are unresponsive to us and to which we ourselves are unresponsive; while others affect us so that the merest trifle, such as the way in which the light falls across the trunks of a group of trees, a flower, an aspect of the dawn, endears them to us forever, and, forgetting every discomfort that we have ever encountered there, we remember this alone.

Now, I find it impossible to write fairly about Upolu—which in speaking of Stevenson, people choose to call Samoa, as though it, alone, comprised the whole group—because from the very first moment I set my eyes upon this island, which I had so greatly longed to see, it was altogether dead to me. Dead and deadening the heavy green of the mountains, lacking the fine piercing peaks of Tahiti; dead and deadening the dark and uniform masses of growth, with their impression of a scene painstakingly done out in Berlin wool by those Germans who were so long in possession.

Deadening, too, was my first sight of the bay, with its wreck of an old German ship which came to grief there as long ago as 1889; deadening the almost incredibly slovenly beach, the once magnificent cocoanut plantations, gray with disease and tightly netted over with that convolvulus-like parasite commonly known as "A-Mile-a-Minute," which stifles everything on which it sets its cruel fingers; dead the hotel,—or, rather, the pretense of of a hotel,—dead, and dusty with death.



A Samoan dancing-girl

It is not that the island is not beautiful, for it is indeed very beautiful. The road up to Vailima is perfectly lovely, with its green spillways to the sea, the tree-clad heights of Vaea, the sharp dipping valleys of the Vai-Singano, the swift-running water-courses and waterfalls, the deep pool shaded with orange-trees where Stevenson used to bathe; though even here what attracted me more than anything else, the only thing which has, so far, really touched me in the whole island,

were the groups of native houses that I passed on my way up to Vailima. And these are like nothing which I have ever seen before, in their fitness and charm, in the cleanliness and delicacy of their surroundings, with their little lawns smooth as pigeons' breasts, shorn by hand with long knives, their flower-beds thick with roses, cannas, balsams, and zinnias of many colors.



A Samoan type

The Samoan native house carries all the enchantment of the dream houses of my childhood days; the Perfect House in the Perfect Wood which not even Barrie himself has been able altogether to reconstruct for me; the house of happiness and joy and plenty and beauty, full of song and laughter, fa-

miliar to fairies and a veritable part of the woodland itself.

The Samoan house has the smoothness and glint of the wing of a golden-tinted butterfly. It is very large, comprising one room only, and round or oval in shape. The immensely high roof of dried and plaited sugar-cane—arched over with slender semicircular laths of wood,



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SAMOAN NATIVE GIRLS DANCING THE SITTING SIVA-SIVA

crossed by heavier beams, for all the world like the inside of an overturned boat—is upheld by two upright posts in the oval houses and one in the round; the whole being fastened together with elaborate plaitings of black and red-brown and biscuit-colored twine worked into an infinitude of geometrical patterns. There is not a single nail in the building. All the wood in these houses is of delicate shades of biscuit and cinnamon. The sides have open cinnamon-colored blinds of plaited sugar-cane, ready to let down if the sun is too hot or the rain beats in too fiercely from one side or the other. The carpet, raised a couple of feet above the level of the ground outside, is formed of the finest transparent black pebbles smoothly raked.

For furniture there are a table, a few cedar-wood boxes, piles of finely woven and patterned mats, and a number of white-covered pillows. By the fineness and number of his mats is a man's wealth known. Some are so rare, so fine, that you can crunch them up in your hand like a piece of silk.

To-day I have been sitting in the house of a chief,—or, rather, lying lazing upon a pile of mats fully four feet by six in size, fringed round with brilliantly colored wools,—looking out upon

a pleasant green lawn with other houses dotted round it, and flower-beds and borders, like silken patches and gay ribbons, running down to a lake-like inlet from the sea. I drank fresh cocoanut milk and smoked a cigarette of pungent home-grown tobacco, like a thin black ribbon, wrapped in a strip of dried and shredded banana leaf. While I talked to my host and played with the baby, the little wife, who had no English, sat by, nodding and smiling; and the retainers, men and women from the other little houses in the village,—who do all the work of the chief's house, the sweeping and drawing of water,—gathered upon the outer fringe of the pebbled floor, smiling too, full of interest and a fine courtesy. And the air flowed coolly through the open house and around us.

Talofa Ali—love to you, O Chief! Will you ever, you people of Samoa, by your dignity and repose, by the cleanliness and order of your dwellings, shame the strangers in your land out of that queer apathy which seems to hang around them, so that it is impossible to walk along the fore-shore of Apia without being reminded of Kipling's lines:

All along of dirtiness, all along of mess,
All along of doing things, rather more or less.

It is devastatingly hot, so hot that one cannot move without everything that one wears being wet through in a moment; while a sort of misty heat hangs over the whole scene, punctuated by clouds of mosquitos. I take a motor and drive a couple of miles out of town and, sending it away, move a few yards into the bush and sit on a log, to watch the building of a great house which is being put up for one of the chiefs. A round house with one immense center pole.

This pole is formed of the trunk of a perfectly straight and very tall tree, stripped of its bark and quite smooth. Over seventy men haul at the ropes, which are fastened to the top of it, as to a May-pole. Logs are pushed in under the lower part of it to give it a start, and slowly, very slowly it is raised. The butt of it is fitted into a hole already prepared, into which more men, running forward, roll stones. While one swarms to the top and hangs by his knees, fixing the smaller cross-beams, others mount half-way. Still others, sticking temporary posts into the ground, mount them and cling to them with their knees, stretching out their hands to uphold the smaller cross-beams while these are being fastened.

The workers wear nothing but their lava-lavas, strips of white material worn round their waists

like petticoats or kilts, shorter than the Tahitian *paréu*, and always, it seems, perfectly clean. In work like this, when the men pull their lava-lavas up and fasten them between their legs, one realizes the perfectly symmetrical patterning of the tattoo spread like fine black lace over the upper part of their legs and thighs and enwrapping their bodies, with a curved line below the breast like a woman's stays.

The old chief for whom the house is being built sits beside me, upon the trunk of a fallen tree, with other white-haired men, gentle and courteous, who talk to me of houses they have seen built, in the past. In a sort of chant they describe them,—the length and height of them, the manifold patterns enwoven around the pillars and beams,—those wonder-houses of former days.

We are four days out from Apia, having left in a deluge of rain which seems to have extinguished the sun completely, for the sky is a still leaden black, split by incessant lightning.

It is very hot; but at the same time there is a chilly dampness in the air. All the port-holes have to be closed, and down below one could cut

the air with a knife. The fumes from the donkey-engine make it almost unendurable.

Up on deck the masts stand bare; the starboard engine is throbbing very faintly, and we scarcely move. The port engine is altogether out of gear, as it has been almost every day since the schooner left San Francisco. The deck is flooded; every now and then a heavy shoot of water slides off from the one scrap of awning which we put up with such joy in Apia. As it is impossible to stay out on the open deck, my only refuge is in the wheel-house. And here, at night, it is impossible to have any light apart from that above the binnacle, where the steersman stands naked to his waist; immovable as a bronze statue, save for the motion of the hands which grasp the spokes of the wheel, the sidelong glances of his eyes showing the whites; so immovable that one jumps when he raises his hand to strike the bell above his head.

The last meal of the day is at five o'clock, and it is dark by six. After this there is nothing to be done save to sit on the minute settee, with one's feet on a soap-box to keep them out of the wet, until one has gathered sufficient courage or is sufficiently drugged with fatigue to go below and sleep. For now that the deck is impossible I am

using the captain's cabin, my conscience lulled by the fact that though he stayed in a hotel at Apia, he was still obliged to sit up in a chair all night.

It is a nice cabin with a good bunk; but there are a great many, too many, cockroaches and copra-bugs. Seven cockroaches and innumerable bugs fell out of my hairbrush only this morning. They do not bite, but they are disgustingly soft and squashy, and have a passion for perambulating all over one's person. With the heat, the prevailing damp, the smells, and the insect life, it is for the time being anything but pleasant on board.

The schooner rolled so last night that the heavy electric fan which the second mate fixed for me in Apia rolled off the table with a tremendous crash, awakening me to the conviction that we must at last have struck a rock. Not that I was in a mood greatly to care, one way or another. Fortunately it stopped raining between three and four, and—feeling as though a thick blanket of fogginess had been laid across my face, my heart stifled in its beat—I wrapped myself in a blanket and went up on deck, where I slept in snatches, curled up in my deck-chair, with the water rushing to and fro under it at each roll of the ship.

It is raining again now, and I rather wonder

why I ever came to sea. But I have felt like that before, in short spasms, and I know the feeling will soon pass. It is not, and never will be, in the least like the constant nostalgia induced in me by shores.

CHAPTER XIII

WE are moving very slowly—for the star-board engine is now out of gear and the wind is light—among the Vavau group of the Tonga Islands. These islands are entirely different from anything I have yet seen in the Pacific, with cliffs from two to four hundred feet in height, splashed with bright-red soil, and tufted with trees wherever trees can find a foothold. Many of them are so straight up and down, so small and symmetrical, that they look like cakes freshly turned out of a tin.

As we enter the narrows which give to the largest island, small isles are so thick upon each side of us that it is difficult to steer our way through the strips of deep-blue water, with their white-topped waves. Clouded spray and tens of thousands of sea-birds are about the base of every cliff, around every peaked rock.

Vavau itself is like an octopus, with chains of lesser islands running off in every direction for tentacles. Here the cliffs shelve above dark

hollows and deep black caves, while the vegetation topping the island, patching the cliffs, is so fresh and light that the whole thing might be torn out of the side of the Devonshire coast. It is a brilliant day, and we are facing the sunrise for the first time since I left England, having taken a complete turn in order to make the port which lies at the south of the island.

Last night when I went to bed it was Saturday; but now, to the growling disgust of every man on board, it is already Monday morning, for we start here upon Australian time and have completely missed out Sunday.

Neiafu, the one harbor of Vavau, is on the south side of the principal island, opposite the northeast coast of Pangai Motu. As we get up to it, the quay is crowded with men, very clean in white lava-lavas, so long that they reach to their ankles, exactly like the fold-over skirts of the day. Miserable things to work in, one would think; but the Tongans do not work, save a very little upon their own plantations, while the trading companies have to import labor to load and unload their ships. Here in front of the harbor there are no cliffs, but green park-like land dotted with great clumps of trees running down to the water's edge. At the back of them the island seems no

more than a tight bouquet of trees, upright upon the cliffs, with the foam of the reef like the frill of an Early Victorian posy around them.

The Burn Philip Company, to whom we are here consigned, have lent me a launch, and run me out, now while the dawn is still fresh, away among the islands to a cave in which the water is the most astounding blue I have ever seen, shot through and through with hundreds of thousands of minute blue and black fish, so thick that they jostle one another. The base of the inner wall of the cave is a madder pink, the arching roof ochre and blue. As we came along the coast we passed reach after reach of deep-golden sand, where people were bathing or fishing, and deep hollows beneath the higher cliffs, of the clearest blue I have ever seen. But returning we break away from the shore altogether, dodge along among innumerable little islands.

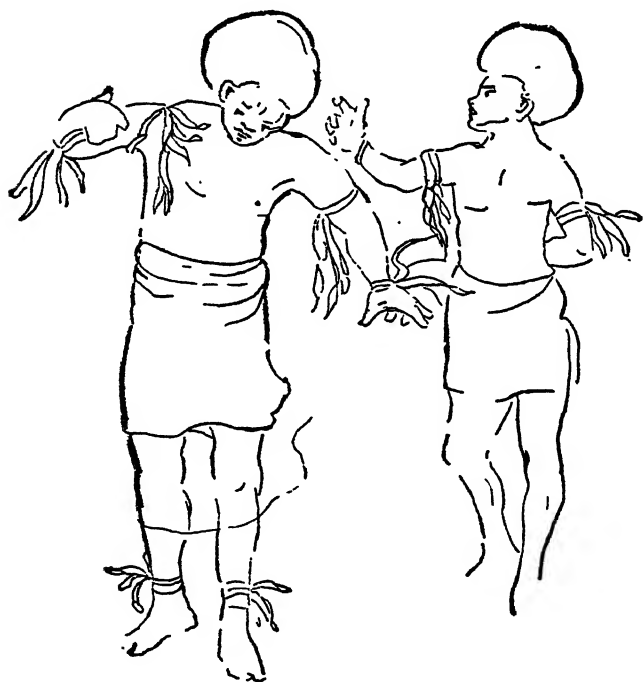
Back on shore, I walk about the tiny township. The boys and girls from a missionary school—what I suppose might be called a finishing school, for many of the pupils are as much as eighteen or nineteen years old and very mature for their age—are gathered in a ring round a half-witted man who is sitting on the ground under a banyan tree. The young people are singing at the tops of their

voices, a sort of loud chant that might be a marching song, breaking into sudden discordant, startling shouts, which they assure me make the poor creature "feel good," though I should doubt it. When I give the fool a shilling one of the boys ties it up in the corner of his lava-lava for him, upon which the man sings a song of thanks to me—the same swinging sort of marching chant that I heard from the boys and girls. He breaks into the same shouts, and massages both ears so hard with both hands all the while that I am afraid he will rub them off.

Going over to the school-house, I see one little imp of a girl with tight, coal-black curls,—many of the Tongans have hair that is more red than black,—dancing, wriggling her hips, and posturing, making strangely Eastern gestures with her hands. A native schoolmaster is standing near, making a great pretense of reading out of a very large book, to impress me. When I ask him to tell more of the girls to dance, he shouts to them; but only one, a fattish girl of about seventeen, steps forward.

After a few minutes some of the elder boys come and stand near, laughing and staring. The dancing girl catches hold of first one and then another, to try to persuade them to dance with

her, but they cuff her aside. At last one, who is in reality a man, steps into the little ring and begins to dance; standing sideways to the girl, with



Male dancers of Vavau

his knees bent out sideways, and his arms and hands held upright from the elbow, palms outward.

At first the two of them merely posture; then the dance becomes faster and faster, though they scarcely move their feet, and frankly sensual in every gesture. They roll their eyes at each other, pouting their lips, and every now and then the man breaks into loud shouts, showing all his teeth in a mirthless and horrible grin. The teacher—Wesleyan trained—stands by, smiling smugly, though he must know what it all means.

The missionaries here are as thick upon the ground as they were in Samoa, and I wonder that the country can support them. The competition for pupils is great, and the boys and girls are kept at school so long that they are never much use for anything else afterward. Here are men from the London Mission, Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists, Wesleyans, Mormons, Roman Catholics, and almost everything else you can think of, though the natives have and try to hold to a Free Tongan Church. All the finest houses and plantations belong to missionaries.

In the afternoon I hire a sulky and take the captain for a drive. It is a great cavalcade. The mare I drive is almost incredibly thin; the reins are too short to be managed in any other way than separately, at the extreme length of my arms;

while a four-months-old colt follows behind, and a man in a purple lava-lava rides on in front to show us the way to where an underground river comes out into a deep lake in a cave, half-way down a steep cliff some three miles from the port.

As we pass through the villages, cutting across wide green lawns, girls and children come running out, juggling with oranges, keeping five or six in the air at once. Then, throwing wreaths over our heads they run away, laughing.

We pass through deep bush in which every tree is hung with parasites and lichen, broken by open patches of cocoanuts far more healthy-looking than the ones I saw in Samoa. There is no sign of vanilla or cocoa, and the greater part of the land is waste. The pool of the underground river is an uncanny place; the air above it dank and chilly. It is reached by a small opening in the face of the cliff, through which men and women slip and swim about like fish in the ice-cold water beneath an absolutely black arched roof.

The mosquitos are almost unbearable upon the schooner, lying up close against the shore as it does, and after dinner to-night I walked away from the little town, up a steep slope, and among the trees, through a series of native villages.

Dipping again, I came at last to a cemetery on the edge of a wide lagoon, where the graves were covered with very finely powdered white coral and decorated, here and there, with glass bottles intended for ornaments. Here I sat down to watch the moon rise over the water. Two natives came up in their canoes and, getting out, waded toward me, pulling it after them. Squatting on their hunkers, quite close to me, they regarded me without—or so it seemed—so much as a wink, for the best part of half an hour. My flesh literally crept, for I have no great belief in cannibalism being altogether obsolete, but at last they got into their canoes and paddled away, and I returned to the ship, where the mosquitos were still making night horrible.

The captain is the most untidy man I have ever seen. I ironed his one shore-going suit before we reached Vavau. When we left he changed into his usual kit, shirt and trousers, flinging his suit over the edge of the bath (which has to be used for storing fresh water, so that one washes in a tin pail, usually with a scrubbing brush), where I found it this morning, sopping wet. His watch and all his money, fallen from his pocket, lay at the bottom of the water.

Now he has been using my typewriter and left it balanced on the very edge of the chart-table. When I take it up, very sweetly, with a Fairchild-Family smile, and, putting it in its case, remark, "That 's where it lives," his only reply is that he reckons it 's like the rest of us, and must "get used to locations."

There is virtually no wind, and we are rolling horribly, with a heavy swell, among deep-troughed waves.

CHAPTER XIV

THE scattered isles of the Haapai group of the Tonga Islands stretch for fifty miles in a northeasterly direction, and Haapai is the heart of it; the warm beating heart of all the Tongans, or so it seems to me, though Nukualofa, in the Tongatabu group, is the head which wears the crown.

From here in Lifuka, the principal island of the Haapai, came the greater part of the old brave warrior blood which pulsed out through the Pacific; of those Argonauts of the Pacific who penetrated so far afield that even in Santa Cruz, or La Perouse, the natives built their huts under the cocoanuts, daring the fall of nuts and boughs so that they might be able to run like monkeys up into the trees at the approach of their enemy. To this very day they frighten their children with the cry: "The Tongans are coming! The Tongans are coming!" And to this day the Samoans are known as "the fowls that roost."

Lifuka is a garden of glades, three quarters of a mile to a mile in width and less than ten miles

in length, facing west and east, so that it is steeped in sunrise and sunset, perfectly flat, hemmed round with white sands.

I do not know why it thrilled me so, but it did, and of all places I have visited it is that in which I long most to stay. For there is a heart and soul in Lifuka: it is old, old, and yet forever panting with youth, filled with warm pulsing blood, all the aspirations and inspirations of youth.

The people in Lifuka are tall and finely made, and beautifully courteous; their complaint against the stranger is that he comes to the island and passes them without salute, with no appeal to the God who means so much to them, with whom they are in daily communion, to bless them. For the religion of the Tongans of Haapai, who own their own church and belong to no other denomination, is the most vital that I have ever come across.

There is one tiny town,—or, rather, one little street,—called Pangai, with a handful of brightly painted stores and shops. Through this and running the length of the island is one wide road, from which, fifty yards or so apart, wide, brilliantly green, smooth grass avenues lead back into the island. These avenues are bordered with breadfruit and mangoes and cocoanut palms, and

the feathery growth of ironbark; while every little group of native huts stands upon its own sward.

Every man or woman or child you meet in Lifuka greets you with the words: "*Ma lo laa*," ("It is good to be alive"). If it is a chief, he raises his right hand in returning your salute. Many of the people, half past you, will turn, smiling, to add to their greeting the words: "*Afa atu*," ("Love to you—health").

It is at Lifuka, in an open glade close against the sea, where the great wooden drums—hollowed trunks of trees beaten once to summon the people to battle, beaten now to summon them to prayer,—stand upon the very spot where the Great Ones, the Heroes, landed.

Before ever the Fijians were known in Fiji they came here; and the place where they knelt, thanking the God of the Jews for their safety and prosperity—men with hooked noses and full-lipped mouths and curling hair, more red than black—is still shown beneath the spreading roots of the banyan tree which forms the roof of the meeting-place of the city fathers of Haapai. The meetings are presided over by a descendant of the same chief who bade Cook welcome, a proud and stubborn man who refused to come out of his hut upon the occasion of the last visit of the queen—

for no other reason than that the train of tapa worn by the aide-de-camp whom she sent to summon him, was not in his eyes sufficiently long, flowing, and ceremonious.

The Taufaa Hau—the Great Ones—brought with them the high priests and the priestesses, all the rituals of the ancient Jewish religion. Though no one up to this time knows rightly who they were, or whence they came, or how they came. One thing is sure: that in bringing their religion, they brought the sword with them. Whatever one may say in praise of the Tongans, up to this very day, no one could so dispraise them as to call them meek.

When the great George Tubou, the great-grandfather of the present queen, embraced Christianity and imposed it upon his people, he went to them with a club in one hand and a Bible in the other, giving them their choice between the two. He spoke of it afterward with a splendid audacity as "the time when I Christianized Tonga with a club." And a very little later, when he began to grow old and the people set themselves against him, pretending that he was mad, he swept through the island again, like a hurricane; destroyed the sacred groves, burned the idols, to which they had returned, and slew the priestesses.

To the last and greatest of all the priestesses he went, demanding the greatest of the gods, Hae-haetahi.

"He is gone for a journey," she said.

"Then we wait for him, you and I," replied the king, sitting down at her side. The two waited, drank kava together—the priestess with Heaven only know what of fear, or maybe real hope, in her heart.

"He is a long time coming, this god of yours," said the king; and then again, and yet again: "He is a long time coming"; laughing, staring into her face; terrorizing her so that she fell at his feet, told him where she had hidden the image of the god. Upon which he hanged the two of them together, up among the rafters of the temple, as a symbol of things to be despised, as a sign of the end of all foolishness.

In the old days, the days before the greatest and the best-abused of all missionaries brought Christianity to George Tubou and the Tongans, all the people in the islands were serfs. They could own nothing: if they gathered cocoanuts or caught fish, they must bring them to the king, lay them at his feet, so that he could take what he wanted of them. One of the tyrant kings of Haapai, indeed, a man named Tugahau, cut off

the right hands of all the young men; the left arms of all the old women; three fingers of the left hand of all the old men; put a taboo on all the cocoanut trees, so that the people starved. He himself was, in the end, murdered by one of the heroes,—if one can use such a word as murder for so righteous an act,—who was, in turn, assassinated by the stepson of the king; who was in his turn slain by his own son, King George's father. And this was how things were in Haapai before the days of Christianity.

There are still high priests and priestesses in the island, ranking with those of royal blood. The son of a high priest can marry no one of lesser rank than the daughter of a king. It is, however, possible for both priests and priestesses to adopt others into their families; one of the three daughters of that first missionary,—who are still living in the island,—is a high priestess, adopted daughter of the last high priest. She is the only one allowed to enter the sacred inclosure of his grave, the only person permitted to attend to the tomb, save on special occasions when she needs help in the garden, and then she must prepare a ceremonial feast, with roast pig, for her helpers.

With this adopted priestess, followed by an ille-

gitimate son of the high priest to keep off devils from the back of me, I myself was permitted to enter the inclosure, to see the tomb. It is six feet long, formed out of solid rock cut by the slaves from the coral reef, overhung with pink hibiscus and spraying asparagus fern.

The arms of Tonga show three swords, signifying the three main groups of islands, and three stars, with a cross and a dove of peace. The name of Haapai, with its three islands of Lifuka, Foa, Haano, means, "Hands uplifted in supplication." The flag of Tonga is white with a red cross; the red signifying a people who have never known a master; the white, peace; the cross being the Cross of Christ. And the lovely name that the Tongans have given to heaven is Lagi, "The place where the shadow of the Almighty's image lives forever."

I walked under the shade of the trees, along the flesh-white sands, to the house where the three remaining daughters of the missionary live. The sun was blazing hot; the glare and glitter on the shining, metal-like leaves of the palms blinding; the shade beneath the more thickly growing trees grateful beyond words. Looking across the road to the wide open glades, with their narrowing

perspective, I saw boys and men with their lava-lavas flowing, galloping on horseback without bridle or saddle, guiding their horses with their feet, sitting as though one with the animals—an enchanting sight. And enchanting, indeed, was all this day in Haapai: the cool stir of wind in the shadows; the pleasant people who greeted me,—the men all in white, the women in those thin black muslin gowns over white slips which all the women in all the islands, even the queen, wear; girded now with fine mats fringed and torn, pulled and twisted out of shape as a symbol of mourning for the loss of a still-born prince.

I sat on the veranda and talked to the three soft-voiced and gentle daughters of the friend of George Tubou. One of these is a hopeless cripple, sitting all day in a wheel-chair; for several years ago she was thrown out of a cart and had both her legs broken; and, as there was no boat at that time running to Fiji, on account of the war, it was impossible to set them. Another of the sisters, badly gored by a cow which she was milking, is almost altogether an invalid. So that upon the slender and fragile shoulders of the third—the high priestess by adoption—all the care of this little family rests. And not that alone, either, for every living man, woman, and child

in Haapai looks to her for help in time of trouble.

Up to quite lately there was another sister, a helpless invalid ever since the time when, close upon forty years ago, she threw her own body—the body of a young girl of eighteen and rarely beautiful, to judge from the photograph which I was shown, with large startled eyes which held in their depths, even then, or so it seemed to me, a premonition of suffering—between the gun of an assassin and her father.

Very, very early in the morning of the day she died, all the people of Haapai who could come so far gathered upon the strip of sand in front of the house and sat there, perfectly silent, waiting for the end. They had seen—or so they swore—seen the Spirit Canoe with its Spirit Paddler top the horizon, just before the moon set. Some declared that even then, in the pinky-gray mists of dawn, they could see it hovering, waiting, ready to bear away the woman they loved. She died but very shortly after sunrise, sitting up in bed and holding out her arms toward the lagoon.

The surviving three sisters live alone in Haapai, and must, so it seems, live thus till they die. With few books and still fewer papers, they seem to be able to discuss every topic of the day, are as charmingly courteous and at ease as though con-

stantly moving in society.—But, then, who could be anything but courteous, living among the Tongans?—Never in my life have I met three people whom I more wish to meet again. For never have I been greeted with a simpler and more whole-hearted hospitality: an easy-chair; a palm-leaf fan; a glass of lemonade made from lemons freshly gathered in the garden which reaches to the sea; home-made cakes and halved paw-paw fruit with the seeds scooped out of it, the hollows filled with chopped banana, the juice of passion-fruit, lemon, and sugar. Of one thing I am certain: that back in the world again, amid the stress and bustle, the noise and infinite fatigue of London life, there is no place on earth that I shall more long to visit than this—a *lagi*, indeed, upon earth.

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CHAPTER XV

I HAVE hated leaving Lifuka, for I don't know when any place has appealed to me like this tiny island, so full of enchantment and romance—that *something* which winds itself about our heartstrings; a mysterious something having, indeed, nothing to do with its white sands, its glades and avenues, its kind and courteous people, but altogether of the spirit, appealing to the spirit, and never to be forgotten.

It is only about an hour's run to Tongatabu, past the volcanic islands of Kao and Tofua, sending out great gusts and pillars of smoke which rose high in the still air as we passed them. In every direction were islands and a network of shoals. We saw the wreck of a schooner which had been broken in half, its bow and stern sticking up so like two sharp-pointed rocks that the captain, not finding it upon his chart, had me make a sketch of it before we realized what it was.

To reach Nukualofa from the east one has to go almost entirely round the island and in through

a series of narrows where we are supposed to wait at least five miles out from the port for the pilot.

We reached this spot at seven this morning and waited until eleven. But there was no sign of any pilot, and by this time the wind had risen; the shallow water was swept with ripples, opal and pale gold above the sands; the air fresh with a wonderful cleanliness in it; the scene unrivaled in its variety and beauty, coral reefs and green islands.

The captain walked to and fro continually, through the wheel-house to the port rail, and back to the starboard; firm and square, and quiet, with a look as though he were tightly buttoned up inside him. And this is, I think, one of the most remarkable things about him: he is so full of life and fire and yet so altogether able to control himself. Never once have I seen him go off the deep end, though when he is annoyed, his mouth shuts like a rat-trap over those white teeth of his, his bright eyes grow brighter and brighter.

Every moment I expected him to break out into curses, abuses, at the very least growlings; for time is money to the *Monterey*, already three months late, and this delay means an end to all chance of getting any work done before Sunday. But he made no sort of fuss; there was not a

word such as, "If he does n't come soon I will" do this or that, or "I have a good mind to" do this or that, such as a weaker man might have braced himself up with. So I was startled and thrilled when, quite suddenly, the starboard engine—which is still the only one of any use to us—got up full steam, a sort of hum ran through the schooner from end to end, as though everything in it were being tightened up, and I realized that the Old Man was actually going to run us into port on his own.

And nothing I can ever say can give any real idea of our route.

Our passage was, indeed, more like a bending race with polo ponies than a ship's course. A swift and madly swerving passage among a tangle of islands and sand-banks and coral shoals; through channels in many places no more than three times the breadth of the schooner; all completely strange to the captain, who has never been over this side of the world before.

He took it gallantly, however, at a hand gallop, as it were; a gallop so altogether exhilarating that it seemed as though my blood had never before run so quickly through my veins; that I was in the midst of a life so altogether vital that it revitalized me; that, if a thing like this could go on

and on throughout the years, it would be impossible for any one ever to grow old, tired, or disillusioned.

There is no bridge to the schooner, and ordinarily the pilot stands upon the unrailed top of the wheel-house; passing his instructions down to the captain, who, in his turn, passes them on to the man at the wheel. To-day, however, the captain himself went up there with his megaphone, glasses, and chart, weighted down upon the deck with anything he put his hand upon. For the day, which began in pale pastel tints, was by then a clear blue and white, with that tearing wind which upon the Pacific seems always to go with such colors.

A Loyalty Island boy—who could not understand a word of English, though he knew enough French to steer by—was at the wheel; while the first mate was stationed at the break of the poop, the second at the foc's'le head,—these two understanding no single word of French, so that the procedure was thus—and thus. I, myself, standing at the door of the wheel-house, translated the captain's orders to the steersman. It was by no means so simple a task as it sounds, for the order to "port" or "starboard" in French means exactly the opposite to what it does in English.

In the one language if you say "port" you mean that the wheel has to be moved so that the nose of the ship goes to port; in the other it is the wheel which has to be turned to port, while the nose of the ship goes to starboard. In addition to this, it was perfectly impossible to steer altogether by the chart, for in these seas the sand-banks are always shifting. And the man conning on the foremast was the only one who could catch the glint of coral beneath the clear water.

Our ramshackle little old engine poured out clouds of black smoke; while the water roared round us, cutting up into ridges of white foam as we turned; and every moment it seemed as though the sharp ridges of coral, spits of sand, so clearly seen below the shallow water, were actually darting forward to meet us.

The ship was alive with shoutings—French, English, and a medley of native lingo. I could even hear the Russian bellowing in his own language, out of sheer excitement, without the slightest expectation of being understood. The only person on board who took no interest in anything, did nothing, was the Englishman, whom we had tried to get rid of in Samoa, but to whom the authorities refused permission to remain in the islands.

As the household cat, at times, gets under one's feet, driving one mad at every step, this man loitering about the deck, and, for goodness knows what purpose, in and out of the wheel-house, exasperated me until I was able to bear it no longer. During one sudden rush from the wheel—where I had been repeating something the steersman had failed to hear—out of the narrow door, to scream a question up at the captain, I ran up against the man, loitering before me, and I did, before I well realized it—or almost did—an unforgivable thing: well, precisely the thing that one does do to the cat. I saw my own foot raised in the air, realized his amazed face as he turned and saw what was upon him.

But this is what comes of living altogether among men for so long. The only chance for me when I do get back to England will be to immure myself in a women's club, as I did several years ago after a visit to Albania, where I never saw a woman unless she were veiled from head to foot; had my meals at the one European hotel in Durazzo, crowded—so crowded that one had to scramble one's way over the beds in the hall to get to the dining-room—with between sixty and seventy men of every nationality, speaking every known language.

I am supposed to have left the schooner with all my bag and baggage and to be waiting in Nukualofa for the next steamer to take me on to Fiji. The fact of the matter is that a ferment of discontent and insubordination has been seething through the boat, the engineer having put the lid on it all by being missing at Vavau, keeping us all waiting, and being brought back in the end very drunk and loudly abusive. The Old Man is spoiling for a row, which he feels it impossible to get himself well into, heart and soul as he would like, so long as I am aboard. My one prayer now is that the storm may burst with a vengeance within the next few days, clearing the air so that I may go on with them again. For, though I have only been twelve hours away, I am already sick for the ship; thankful to remember how altogether taken aback the men were when they heard that I was leaving it. I cherish the second mate's assertion that he would keep my chair aboard, "so that it will kind of seem as though you were coming back."

Here in Nukualofa there is no hotel, but a boarding-house colloquially known, throughout the whole of the Pacific, as Smith's; the oddest place I have ever seen, with sixteen or seventeen rooms all opening out of each other. The greater

number of these rooms have no outside windows whatever, while I myself have been given an angle cut off from the front veranda which serves the other boarders as sitting- and smoking-room, where the belle of the boarding-house—a typist with one of the business firms—spends her entire spare time manicuring her nails and flirting with the young men: clerks and cable men and salesmen from the stores. The room is so lightly screened from the rest of the world by a muslin curtain that I did not dare to burn a light when I was undressing last night, lest I provide a perfect silhouette show for the company already very freely discussing me. The doors to the two rooms, men's rooms, opening into mine, not only do not lock, but will not even keep shut; they fly open at any sudden gust of wind or if any one shakes the rickety wooden building by walking too heavily across the floor or sitting down too suddenly. Both of them were wide open this morning, so that when I sat up to drink the cup of tea the native girl had put down at my side, two tousled heads were raised, two men sat up to drink their tea, and a friendly conversation followed. Thus I now know exactly which is the one who snores, and which is the one who mutters in his sleep; who it was who lost a collar stud this

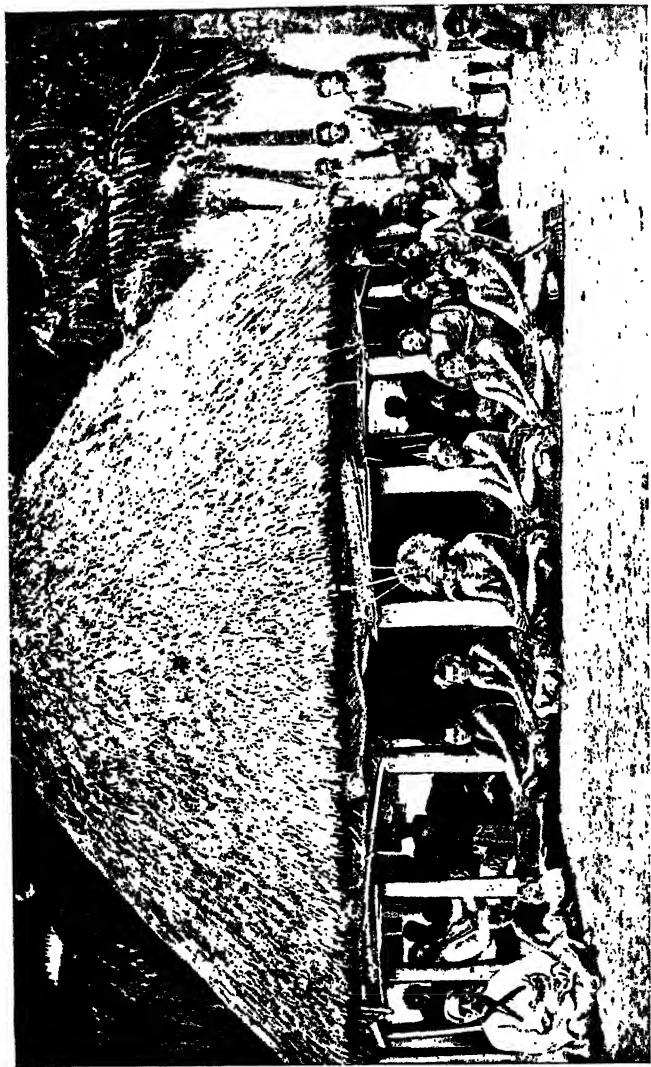
morning,—finding a very great deal to say about it too,—and who cut himself shaving. Not that it matters, for the Pacific is, indeed, a world of nothing-matters, almost as much as it is a world of to-morrow. And the kindness of the people who run the boarding-house, the real authentic Smiths with their two delightful boys, the beauty and courtesy of the native serving-girls, over-balance the ingenious inconvenience of the building. There is compensation for everything, indeed, save the frightful and unparalleled voracity of the mosquitos; the tumult of the native village just outside my window; the multitude of pigs and dogs, ever at odds; the night made hideous by squealings and yappings, the wild rush of pursued and pursuer.

In Nukualofa is the seat of monarchy. All along the sea-front is a wide double avenue of ironbark trees, with that delicate and feathery growth which is such a relief after the heavy opaque foliage of eternal palms. To one side of it, the royal palace and chapel of white-painted wood, with as many frettings and scrollings and pinnacles as though it were playing at being Milan Cathedral in a German toy sort of a way.

At first sight the island strikes one as disappointing, for it is so altogether flat that there

is very little to be seen. But once get away from the town, back a little into the country, and the enchantment of it all catches you: the wonderful variety of foliage, the inland salt lake, the villages, the people. From every curve of the shore one sees a fresh panorama of islands—*island upon island upon island*, with sailing-boats, of every sort of rig, skimming the glassy surface of the sea like butterflies.

I am sitting now on the sands, scribbling. A little light ketch has just come in from one of the islands, laden with people in holiday dress and wreathed with flowers. They bring with them nine great turtles, and half a dozen pigs, which they unlade in the most callous way possible, dragging the turtles up the steep slope of sand—on their backs, with wildly waving flappers and altogether insulted air, terribly reminiscent of stout old ladies being carried out of church in a fit. These turtles are eaten by the people and the shells, regarded as nothing more than mere useless lumber, are thrown away; and a wild scheme for at last making a fortune by collecting turtle-shells in Tongatabu simmers gently through my mind: a scheme which I know perfectly well will never be carried out, will be put off till to-morrow, and



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SAMOAN NATIVES ABOUT TO DANCE THE SITTING SIVA-SIVA

to-morrow, and to-morrow. For there is no doubt whatever that the Pacific has got me, once and for all, with what seems like the constant repetition of the same dream—which is yet never altogether the same, for the spirit of every place we touch at is delicately yet altogether different.

On Tongatabu, which a casual tourist might pass by as yet another island with the eternal sameness of all tropical islands, the whole spirit, light and joyous and forever youthful, is the spirit of play. So that in talking over my wanderings, as I shall do, as we all do,—though no one really cares to listen and we know it, fully realizing that there is nothing more than a personal stimulus and delight in saying, In this place it was like this or that, the people so-and-so or so-and-so,—Tongatabu will remain forever the playground, the people of Tongatabu the playboys, of the Pacific isles.

For here there is no need for any one to work. It is, indeed, an earthly paradise, where all alike have a few cocoanut trees and a few fowls and many pigs; where each boy upon reaching the age of eighteen is given half an acre of land in his own village and three acres of bush land; where if any one needs kerosene or a new lava-lava or a

little money to pay the infinitesimal taxes, no more exertion is required than that necessary to gather a few nuts, dry and sell a little copra.

For the rest, the people dance and sing, strumming softly upon their guitars, feast, and play at football, tennis, and cricket upon the smooth green and park-like glade in the center of every little hamlet, for, however small the gathering of huts, there is a cricket-pitch of concrete where the people play with English cricket bats and balls, and a roughly marked-out tennis-court with a fishing-net hung across it. If in the evening you drive through a village where the people are laughing and singing and calling to one another in soft-syllabled words, it is as though a garden fête were in progress. As for feasting . . . ! The queen, who has been away in the country, only nine miles distant, for two or three weeks, came back to her capital yesterday, for no more than a couple of days, and there was feasting throughout the length and breadth of it, with ceremonial lengths of tapa and festive mats laid out under the trees and a tremendous cooking of pigs and yam and breadfruit.

I myself—the *papalagi*, or stranger of the hour—am to-day being fêted. The occasion will forever live in my memory, like a clear picture painted

upon metal—or, rather, an enamel run out upon metal in brilliant greens and purples and blues with gold and silver dust—a picture which nothing can destroy. In looking back upon my life I shall be able to say, whatever happened before, this, whatever happens after, I shall have had at least this one brilliant and unspoiled day.

A planter, half Swiss and half Tongan, arranged the feast, at which the captain of the *Monterey* was the only other European guest, and to which we drove some twelve miles in a motor; going past the Queen's Garden and the Resting Place of Kings, a raised platform of stone beneath a vast banyan tree.

Passing Mua, the queen's country retreat, I saw that she was there again, sitting on the ground in front of the house, which is altogether a native one, among her women. Begging the others to wait for me, I got out of the motor and crossed the glade to speak to her.

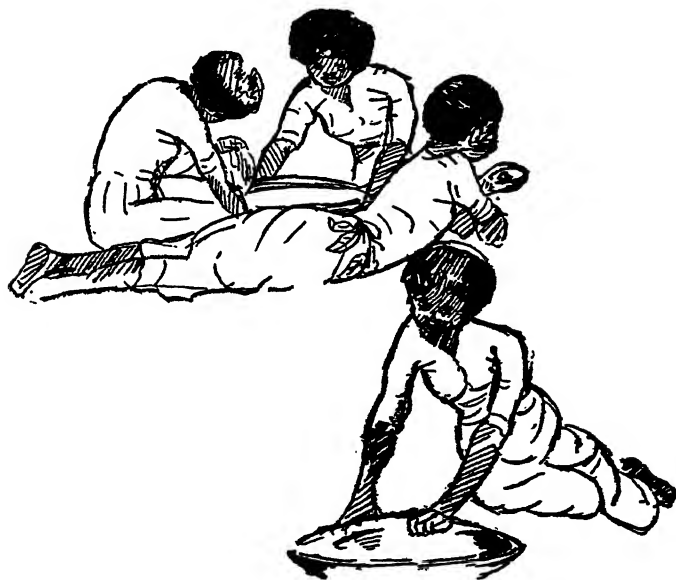
She signed for me to sit down by her, and we talked together, for she has been at school in New Zealand and speaks perfectly good English. She and all the other women, who sat in a semicircle at a little distance from her, were dressed in the same way, in a thin black muslin dress over white chemise and petticoat, while none of them wore

shoes or stockings. But for all that she stood out above all of them in her dignity and serenity; an immense young woman, no more than twenty-four years of age, six foot four in height and already too fat, though magnificently made.

There has of late been trouble among the Tongan Islanders in regard to their own Free Church. The prince consort, who is a good many years older than the queen, has great power over her, or so it is said. He holds as strong a hand as any man can well do, being not only prince consort, but Minister of Education and Minister of Customs, and he dominates the young queen, Salote Tubou, to such an extent that she is becoming very unpopular. The last straw is that he has persuaded or is persuading her to force the people to give back their church to the Wesleyans, to whom he belongs. I saw him yesterday and he promised me that nothing would be done without the full consent of all the people; and yet, immediately afterward, that very afternoon, there was an unexpected and unannounced meeting of the council, with scarcely any one there, and the measure for the transference passed.

To-day the queen's women, a vast kava bowl in front of them, were making kava, wringing out the roots in their hands. They brought the queen

the polished half of a cocoanut shell from which she drank, afterward throwing the shell far away from her, as is the custom. They then brought me a shell of kava, but I was out of temper and



Making kava

would not drink, telling the queen very plainly what I thought of her; expressing it as my opinion that if she persisted in her course in regard to the people's religion she would end by losing her kingdom. With the placidity of all very fat

people, however, she kept perfectly calm under my onslaught, reiterating the words, "You must ask my husband about that. . . . You must tell my husband about that . . . I leave all that to my husband," until, out of all patience with her, I got up and flung back to the motor, without so much as the semblance of an obeisance or good-by.

The fête to-day, which takes the form of a picnic, is held at the base of a steep cliff toward which, some twelve miles out from Nukualofa, we turn, through by-roads so thick with greasy mud that again and again we stick and, rounding our hands to our mouths, shout for natives to come and haul us out with the ropes which we carry. At the end of the motor drive there is a walk through grass of a height above my shoulders for close upon half a mile, a scramble down the steep sides of a cliff, thick with undergrowth, and we come upon the scene set for our little play: a curve of cream-tinted sand round a small bay; a strip of purple-blue lagoon, and pale-jade and lapis-lazuli breakers with white crests upon the reef.

I have wandered along the shore and paddled through the water into another bay, silent and

fresh and clean as at creation. I bathed in a deep pool in the coral under the hanging cliffs, then, getting back into my clothes, with my skirt pulled up to my knees, my shoes and stockings hung over my arm, waded out to the reef, where I am sitting. I came past brilliant pools of madder and purple and vivid-green rocks; pools as clear as jewels, with pink branching corals and feathery brilliant green seaweeds, and jeweled fish and sea-anemones, and jellyfish, like delicate lengths of silk puffed out with water, thick within them.

Now, upon the reef, the roar of the waves is tremendous as they raise their green throats high as temple arches above me, threaten terribly, then drop in a smother of white foam, with a sound like laughter. The people on the shore call and beckon to me. The table-cloths of palm-leaves—woven with fingers which move as swiftly as small dark fish sporting in a pool—are already laid. Some of the guests are seated about this cloth, others are bent over holes in the ground filled with hot stones, taking out of them the cooked food. The hair of some of the men measures two feet across the top, is smooth and massive as a clipped yew hedge, and singed into shape, so that no single hair stands a fraction higher than

another, by women with red-hot stones. The girls' hair falls loosely and is decked with flowers and maidenhair fern.

For the feast there are two almost full-grown pigs and four fowls, with a pile of breadfruit as big as a road-mender's heap of stones by the roadside: all of which we finish completely, washing it down with kava drunk from halved and polished cocoanut shells. The pigs and fowls are all deliciously stuffed with herbs and lemon and mashed sweet potatoes. The leader of the feast has a large knife with which he cuts the thick skin about the throat of each pig, then tears it, and we eat it with our teeth and fingers—for there are no other knives and no forks—holding our salt in the hollow of our hands.

After the feast is over we lie in the shade and rest a little. Then, though the sun is still high in the heavens, two girls and two men draw apart in opposite directions to make themselves ready for the dance. An older woman attends upon the girls, oiling them all over, dressing them in grass mats as fine and soft as silk, appliquéd with patterns of black velvet, and hanging them with ferns and green creepers. The men, taking off their lava-lavas, oil themselves, don a very short pair of cotton shorts, and wreath themselves with

garlands of brilliant green weed from off the rocks.

The sun is still high in the heavens, but now the two couples, coming forward and meeting each other, begin to dance upon the hard white sand at the edge of the water, with the opal of the lagoon, the wall of foam upon the reef, the solid blue of the afternoon sky, as a drop sheet behind them, and to the right a dark arched cave of every shade of purple and deep madder. Every movement of these dancers—their advancing, retreating, beckoning—is infinitely luring, full of the suggestions of passion and love. They are so altogether Egyptian that they seem to have stepped out of an Egyptian frieze.

There are two guitars to which the players sing in deep, monotonous tones; while we others, sitting along the sand upon our heels, swing our bodies to and fro, at first slowly then more and more quickly, clapping our hollowed palms, following the quickened movement of the dancers; breaking off a little as they pause, posing, as motionless as statues, then beginning again; faster and still faster, swung not so much by our volition as by the allurements, the excitement of their movements.

As I squat here upon the sand, clapping my hol-

lowed palms together, swinging my body to and fro, quite suddenly—as though the slides were unexpectedly changed in a magic-lantern—my mind goes back to the last dinner I was at in London:



Tongans dancing on the shore

a large literary dinner overborne by the eternal complacent sameness which overwhelms all people of one craft gathered together in a mass. I wonder what on earth the other guests would think of me if they could see me now, without shoes or stockings, my wet hair dripping down my back. Or if they could have seen me eating pork and

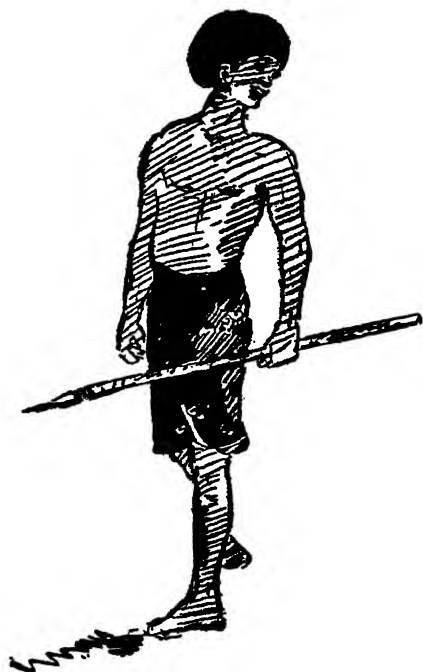
chicken with my fingers. But it only shows how quickly one can drop into anything on earth, may ultimately drop into anything above or below it, while manners are, like morals, the merest matter of latitude and longitude.

I have come out for a drive with the elder of the two Smith boys, a lad of fourteen, who knows everything there is to be known about the customs and superstitions of the people here, the birds and flowers. We have driven for some twelve miles,—in a buggy with an ancient white horse, and harness rather inadequately tied up with string, which the half-caste Swiss planter has lent me,—past the one spring of natural water in the whole island, to this spot where I am now writing. And picture it if you can: a group of brilliant, glossy-leaved trees with immense blackened trunks; and beneath their shade a number of elderly men sitting round a kava bowl, drinking and smoking with an air of the deepest serenity.

Away from this shaded spot runs a clear, wide open glade covered with short smooth grass, with an immense spread of tapa, two hundred fathoms in length, laid out upon it.

Tapa-cloth is made of a certain bark, wetted and pulped and beaten into flat sheets, then glued

together so skilfully that there is no join to be seen. It is white and soft as silk—so soft that one can crumple it up in one's hand without creas-



A Tongan type

ing it. Upon a sheet of white tapa the women of these islands make patterns, nearly all geometrical and perfectly symmetrical, in black or brown, using in place of paint-brushes small three-cornered pieces of slate or stone.

This length of tapa laid out in the glade was already nearly finished, though at

the farther end there were at least fifty women at work upon it. Along each edge there was a fine pattern of red-brown, with diagonal stripes and diamonds. Against this there were half-

diamonds of solid black, two broad black stripes, a line of checks, a broad band of groups of four wings like *aéroplanes*, another stripe, a zigzag of black and white, and a strange cubist-looking design of elongated diamonds. The same pattern was repeated from the other side until the two of them met. No rough sketch is drawn in with charcoal, and yet there is not one single mistake in the entire length and breadth of the strip. Only imagine the accuracy implied in such work!

We sit for a while among the men, talking to them, the Smith boy translating all that they say. Here the shadows are like gray velvet, the patches of light which fall between the leaves of the trees a brilliant golden green; the air is like a caress, the touch of a cool petal of a sweet-scented flower against one's face. The first time I drank kava I hated it, thought that it tasted like nothing so much on earth as stale soap-suds; but now there is no drink to be found in tropical countries that I should prefer, and I drink with gratitude what the men offer to me, throwing my cup as far as possible after I have drunk. We get up and, walking along the length of *tapa*, join the women at the end of it. There is less than a yard to be done now and as they ask me to add something to it, I put my initials and a prancing horse in

one corner of it, witness throughout centuries to come—as this tapa is virtually indestructible—to the ineptness of a European working with tools to which she is unaccustomed; for there is nothing, apart from the point of a triangular piece of wood, to serve me as a brush.

The boy and I have come on through an avenue of ironbarks to the shore, and are now sitting at the top of the terraces, half cliffs, of white coral, serrated into a thousand spikes and hollows, with rounded pools and semi-terraces. Here we watch the great plumes and towers of water which come up through the blow-holes; for the Pacific breakers rush in with all their force, under these terraces, and up through the holes, scattering in lofty columns of foam and spray far, far overhead, against the brilliance of the unclouded midday sky; driven by the wind back inland over the cocoanut groves, mingling with the spray-like foliage of the ironbarks.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER all, I am back on the *Monterey*, sitting in that very chair which I left as hostage. I am filled with delight at the reception I received; for the two mates and the captain, standing together, with the engineer, as though there had never been so much as a hint of misunderstanding between them, were at the top of the gangway to greet me with the words, "Welcome home." It is impossible to express my intense satisfaction at finding myself aboard again, despite the fact that the copra-bugs and cockroaches seem to have taken entire possession.

The actual and spiritual atmosphere alike have cleared, and we ran before a fair wind, with all sails set, that devil of an engine unregarded, 'twixt a blue sea and a bluer sky flecked with light mackerel clouds. Throughout the entire ten days which it has taken us to reach Suva, each day has ended in a blazing sunset and slipped into a

moonlight night so clear that one could see to read on deck.

Suva, the capital of Viti Levu, and the seat of government of the Fiji Islands, is on a great bay surrounded by mountains far enough away not to overshadow the town, of an inconceivable number of shades of delicate blue—blue of bluebells and partly opened harebells, harebells faded of summer suns, and ghosts of harebells.

There is an out-of-the-way good hotel where I am staying until I can find out some means of getting up-country; for I find the town itself a very dreary place where people play at being in London—a little on the outskirts, perhaps, but still very select, elaborately dressing for dinner each night. Indeed, in Suva two things strike me more than anything else: the splendid appearance of the native Fijians, with their immense and symmetrical heads of hair,—who walk like princes and are so superior to the imported East Indian, with his poor physique and curiously furtive air,—and the dress of the European women, delicately fresh and forever new, or so it seems.

I went down to the port office this morning, to meet the captain and get my formal discharge



PREPARING A FEAST IN TONGATABU

from the *Monterey*, though it breaks my heart to think that I must leave. But the schooner is not staying here long enough to give me time to see the islands.

For some whim, I dressed all in my best, in a delicate pale-gray embroidered muslin, large black hat, and, as an exaggeration of affectation, long white *suede* gloves, and nothing has ever amused me more than the faces of the officials waiting ready to make out the papers of the ex-stewardess of the little schooner—small, bedraggled, rakish as a rough-haired fighting terrier, one ear cocked, the other torn down—which lies against the wharf, discharging cargo with a good deal of language upon every side.

The certificate of discharge, with an American twenty-five cent piece, as there must be some pretense of wages, lie before me on the table, back in my room where I sit writing, after a luncheon at which the captain and I drank each other's health with many pretty compliments, with many true regrets at parting. Really, it is altogether ridiculous to think that I am going to leave a boat to which I am far more mated than most men to their wives.

Here is the discharge:

THE VENTURE BOOK

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

Name of Ship	Official Number	Port of Registry	Registered Tonnage
Monterey		Panama	1143
Horse-Power of Engine (if any)		Description of Voyage or Employment	
600		Stewardess Foreign	
Name of Seaman	Age	Place of Birth	Capacity, if Mate or Engineer No. of Certificate (if any)
E. M. Mordaunt		England	Stewardess
Date of Engagement	Place of Engagement	Date of Discharge	Place of Discharge
	Tahiti	3 / 5 / 24.	Suva, Fiji.

I certify that the above particulars are correct, and that the above-mentioned Seaman was discharged accordingly; and that the character described below is a true copy of the Report concerning the said Seaman.

Dated this 3rd day of May, 1924.

A. L. Laur, Master.

Authenticated by

W. W. Savage,

Shipping Master.

Character for Conduct }
Character for Ability } V. G.

Collector of Customs
SUVA, FIJI

What altogether mistaken ideas people have about the women of the Victorian age! While resting and gathering myself together before I start off on my expedition up-country, I have talked a great deal with two elderly maiden ladies who are staying in the hotel at Suva and they leave me absolutely gasping at the things which they, and their mothers before them, seem to have taken for granted. Their attitude is in strong contrast to that of the young married women of to-day, with their complaints of it all, the loneliness of the places to which their husbands' business takes them, the dullness, the fear for their own health, the nerves and general sensitive-ness.

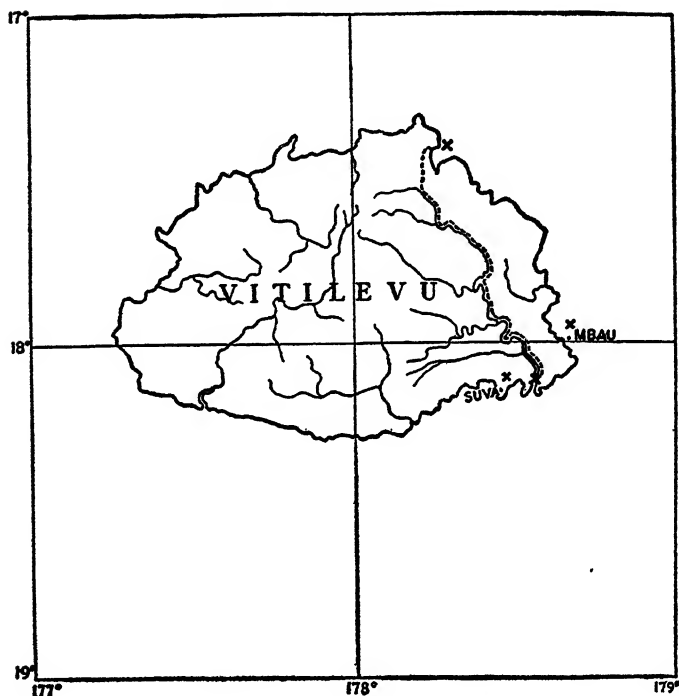
Years ago, when these two elderly ladies were small children, their father and mother came to Fiji upon a schooner, the *Dancing Wave*, having been told that the Wainimala, right on the edge of the cannibal country, if not in it, would be a good place in which to settle and plant coffee.

They brought with them, from New Zealand, six children, a white woman-servant, a Maori man-servant, several horses—among which was a beautiful gray stallion, killed within a few days by a native's poisoned arrow—cattle, rabbits, fowls, pigeons, and all their household stuff. The

eldest boy was at that time sixteen and the youngest child five.

The mother was so ill on the voyage that, when

FIJI ISLANDS



they reached Levuka, they decided to stay there for a few days, anchoring the schooner and going off in a boat to the shore. They were quickly driven back by the sight of the trussed-up limbs

of a man, openly carried through the little town to a place where the fires were already lighted for a feast, and by the sound of firing, though of this they were told, quite casually, that it was nothing more than the hillmen fighting the lowlanders. Anyhow, they did not attempt to go on shore again, for all their sickness and fatigue, until Wainimala itself was reached. There they seemed to have settled down quite placidly, despite the fact that when the whole family went to take lunch with the Burns family, their nearest neighbors—the first and last occasion, for a very few weeks later the Burnses were all murdered—the little new-comers, running out to the native lines to play with the Burns children, were struck by the sight of a row of poles with the immense fuzzy heads of some half-dozen of the highlanders stuck upon them. The highlanders themselves had already been cooked and eaten.

They spoke of it quite placidly, these sweet white-haired old ladies, sitting, with white folded hands, in the lounge of the hotel. When I asked if their mother was frightened, if there had been any talk of her leaving her husband and taking her children away with her from such a place, they seemed surprised, though this affair of the Burns family—and they themselves had seen

fragments of their playfellows floating down the river past their house—had by no means been the end. Out in a canoe with their father and brother, a very little while later, they met a man in a canoe, fleeing from the scene of the murder of Mr. Mackintosh and Mr. Spiers. They themselves had already passed Mrs. Spiers's house, and, returning as quickly as they could, they took the unfortunate wife back with them to their own house, after which the father and his young son, both fully armed, went up the river again, to the place where the murder had been committed. There they saw the trunks of the two murdered men—with the heads, arms, and legs cut off them, already prepared for the feast—propped against a tree.

They told me too, these gentle ladies, of how their mother,—and in what we consider the most mushy period of Victoria's reign,—when her husband was away from home on business, one day heard a great palaver going on upon the river brink, among a group of gesticulating natives. She went down alone, and apparently without the slightest qualm, to find her friendly lowlanders dragging a highlander, riddled with bullets but still alive, along the ground; disputing how they could best get him to the other side of the river,

where their store of wood was stacked, so as to finish killing him and cook him.

Queer—to think that there are now at home in England, at Oxford, at Balliol, even, grandsons of these old cannibals, finishing their education. Though, after all, there are far worse things in life than murder or cannibalism. The moral standards of almost any European man would have brought a blush to the cheek of these warriors, with whom incontinence in the young man before marriage was regarded, not as something manly, but as the sign of a feeble, weak-minded person, a sin certain to be followed by the loss of health if not by the loss of life itself.

These old ladies in the hotel told me of the murder of the missionary Mr. Baker. Some of the natives themselves implicated in the murder recounted to them—with shame over having been so uneducated and provincial—the fact that, not realizing that his boots were detachable, they had boiled, and boiled, and reboiled his feet in despair of ever getting them tender.

I am writing now from the tiny island of Mbau, the native metropolis of Fiji; for Suva is altogether European, the Putney of the Pacific. This is by far the most romance-haunted spot—the spot

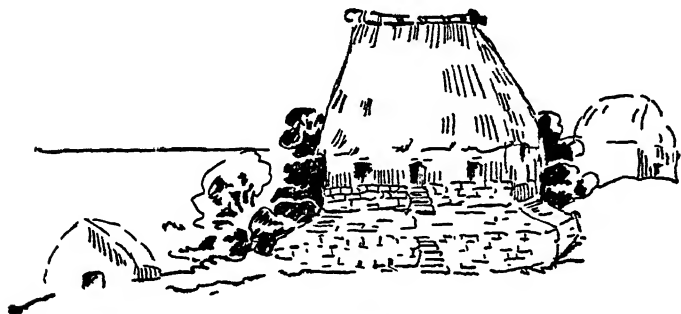
which almost speaks, and groans in speaking, of what is past—in all the islands. It is the center of all that was dreadful in the wild days of the old Fiji; the home of kings and chiefs, the shrine of cannibalism. Mbau the beautiful, Mbau the terrible.

Ratu Pope, the premier chief of Fiji, invited me to stay here. The invitation was received through the introduction of a young Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society with whom I have made friends, and who is, for the time being, teaching in the principal boarding-school for the sons of chiefs. In Fiji, all the chiefs send their sons to boarding-school as we do in England, receiving them home but once a year.

Ratu Pope Seniloli, Na Gone Turanga ni Vuni-valu ("Child of the Root of War"), himself came down to the water's edge to meet us, as we disembarked from the canoe which he had sent across to the main coast for us,—navigated by a host of small boys, who perched like birds along the wide-spreading wing-like bows of the outrigger. Though he is in some disfavor with the English, he is as fine an aristocrat as Fiji can show. For Fiji is a land where at a single glance, though all dress alike, one can discriminate between the noble and the commoner; where the

aristocracy is so fiercely maintained that any young noble might as well cut his own throat as marry the daughter of a commoner.

We have come to the guest-house, which Ratu Pope has prepared for us, past the council house



The council house at Mbau

which now stands in the place of one of the old temples, upon the same terrace formed of great blocks of stone—many of them as much as ten feet in height and more than half that width across—which were brought to Mbau by canoe in the days of its grandeur. There, also, are the great and sacred gate-posts stolen from Kadavu and brought to Mbau, stolen again by the men of Rewa and brought back, stolen and brought back again, and yet again, with God only knows what bloodshed; gate-posts between which un-

numbered British sailors, lured to the island and sacrificed upon the terraces, were dragged. I saw the site of the Temple of the Human Being Fishermen, with its two gigantic, hoary banyan trees, still so sacred that no single twig can be cut from them without a great feasting and offer-



The sacred trees of Mbau

ing up of roast pigs. It has terraces like those of the other temple, less than sixty years ago soaked with blood.

If only I could put it all into words which could adequately picture it, give my whole impression of it, this minute kingdom of Mbau, with its immemorial customs; the atmosphere of something

powerful, great, and dreadful which still hangs round it, so that the sighing of the wind among the trees, the whisper of the waves along the shore, are like the sighing and the whispering of those who once knew themselves about to perish upon it. It is a place where ghosts walk, and sigh and whisper throughout the entire night; a place inhabited by hundreds whom, without seeing, one can feel about one.

At home in England, men stand at attention before their superiors; but here, as we walk along the narrow strip of coast and through the village edging the sea, men and women alike squat upon their haunches, for it is forbidden to stand upright before a chief. At lunch the man and two girls who wait upon us, in general magnificently erect,—one of the girls, Maopa Tui Rewa, the daughter of a chief, and lady-in-waiting to Ratu Pope's wife, I have already seen crossing a glade with the swiftness and swing of a panther,—move crouching, bent almost double, round the table, kneel to serve their chief, and in asking him any question, kneel behind his chair, whispering—not because the thing is secret, but because one must not raise one's voice in the presence of the Great One. Even the boy who takes away my wet shoes, to dry and clean, brings them back to me

crouching, and kneels as he hands them to me.

I have a house to myself, with a sitting-room and large bedroom in which is a wooden bed spread with finely woven mats fringed with scarlet and bright green and black wool. The bedroom has two doors and two windows, one window and one door opening on to a yard-wide strip of grass, with the low sea-wall beneath it, the other giving into a large sitting-room in which we all take our meals: that is, the chief and his little son of twelve, Ratu George Kadavulevu, or Prince Kadavu, myself, and my companion; for the women of the family do not in general dine with the men. In addition to this is another building where my traveling companion and George sleep, and a separate kitchen. There is, indeed, nothing it is possible to think of that has not been done for our comfort and entertainment, nothing which we could possibly fancy to eat which is not offered to us; as is only natural in this part of a country where there are special invocations made over a child immediately after birth to save it from that worst of all vices, stinginess.

Each night during those faint and mysterious hours when the strength of man is at its lowest, the chief gets up and walks round his island, then goes back to bed until five or six o'clock. And

the island is like this: It is half a mile in circumference, within the middle of it a flat-topped hill like a haystack with the graves of chiefs upon it. Upon three sides there is nothing more than a narrow strip of land between the hill and the sea; on the fourth is a stretch of smooth open green in front of the old temples, and a few sacred trees, and, at the farther side of it, the village, which runs along the edge of the sea, stretching from the green to the inclosure of the house of the chief, who is not only Lord of Mbau, but Lord of all the Isles. Although the island is so small, there are twelve wells upon it, with fresh water in them as close as six feet from the edge of the sea.

The widowed sister of Ratu Pope lives in the village. Almost the first thing he asked us upon our arrival was that we should go and call upon her, and this evening I have been spending an hour and more sitting in her house, talking to her. She is a woman whom one must recognize at a single glance as the sister and child of a chief, with her pride of bearing, her fine skin, her almost Greek features, her hair more wavy than fuzzy, lying in the smooth waves of the modern shingle, her fine, slender, quiet hands, her grave and sincere gaze.

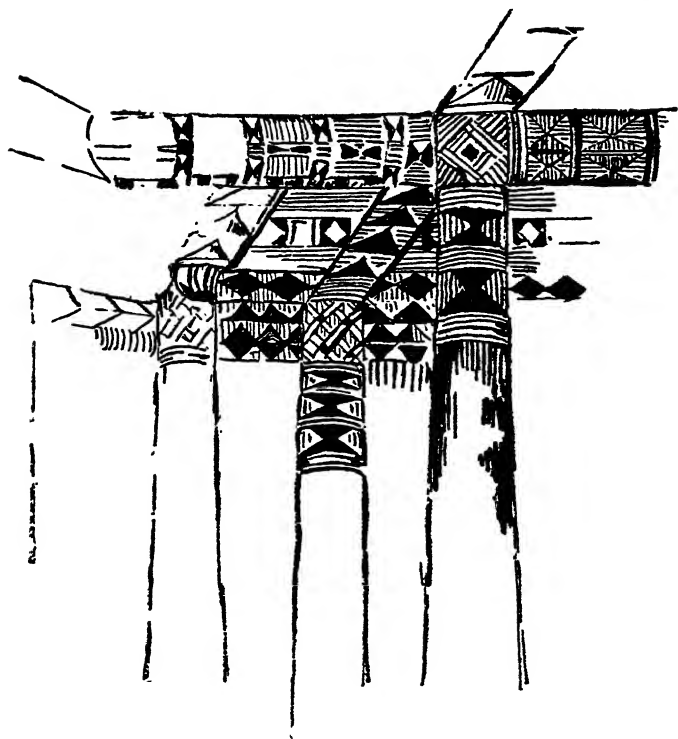
In every way Ratu Pope thinks of and for his sister, Adi—the Princess—Cakobau, with the greatest devotion and tenderness. But he cannot speak to his own sister, for that is forbidden to any man of high rank in Fiji; nor can he enter



Adi Litia Cakobau

her house, for that also is against the etiquette of a country which is ruled by etiquette. And yet, if this sister of his had had a son and Ratu Pope a daughter, these would inevitably, in the old days, have been husband and wife without the necessity of any ceremony; though if Ratu had a son, it would be an abomination for him to mate with his cousin, the daughter of his father's sister.

Ratu Pope's own house consists of one immense sitting-room and a small bedroom. All the pillars and beams in the large room are decorated with geometric patterns, formed by the black and russet-brown and pale biscuit-colored twine which holds them together, for no nails are used. There are many beams and many pillars, for the roof is high, so that, sitting at one end of the house, one



Some of the sennit work in Ratu Pope's house

looks down an elaborate vista, with not two patterns alike. The entire floor is covered with one immense mat of white woven pandanus leaf, patterned in black.

Seated at the doorway of my house with Adi Torika, Ratu Pope's wife, and the girl, Tui Rewa,

I have been telling them of the sciatica or arthritis or whatever it is torturing my left leg, which has been twice broken. They, in their turn, immensely concerned, have tendered me a great deal of advice as to the use of certain leaves, the coöperation of the fairies, gravely doubtful as to whether dwarfs—whom they picture as we have always pictured them: squat, malevolent creatures with bald heads and long gray beards—may not have something to do with it.

“Or an enemy,” suggests Tui Rewa, gazing at me with her great shining dark eyes, so full of life and intelligence. “If you can find your enemy, Marama, and cut a little piece off his dress, or the mat he has been sitting upon, then roll it up with earth and grass and seaweed, so as to make a little figure of him, and get the magic man to say magic words over it, then take your enemy’s water-bottle and put the image in it and bury it in the ground, it is certain that your enemy will die, Marama, and the pain in your leg be better.”

Adi Torika has a sad face; as Tui Rewa chatters on, she sits with her hands folded in her lap, gazing out at sea through the open door.

“Adi Torika,” I say to her, “what will you do when your son goes back to school? You will be very lonely without him. You, Adi Torika, and

Ratu Pope, ought to have more children so that the world may know how fine a thing the children of chiefs can be; what is one son to people like you?"

The moment the words were out of my stupid mouth, I could have bitten off my tongue; for the tears came into her eyes and she turned her head aside.

"Is she angry?" I questioned Tui Rewa.

But Rewa shook her head, and Adi herself, flashing me a reassuring smile, turned to Rewa and laying her hand upon her knee, spoke to her in her own language.

"The Princess Torika wants me to tell you," said Rewa, "that she can have no more children, for she and her husband, Ratu Pope, broke all the laws of etiquette and propriety by not going to stay a month with her father and mother after Ratu George Seniloli was born. And that is why she is always sad. Seeing that they refused this homage to her parents, it is forbidden to them to have more children, and day and night she dreams of them and longs for them."

Of all the people in the island of Mbau, the one I have most longed to meet is the Chief of the Tribe of Human Fishermen,—or, rather, "Fisher-

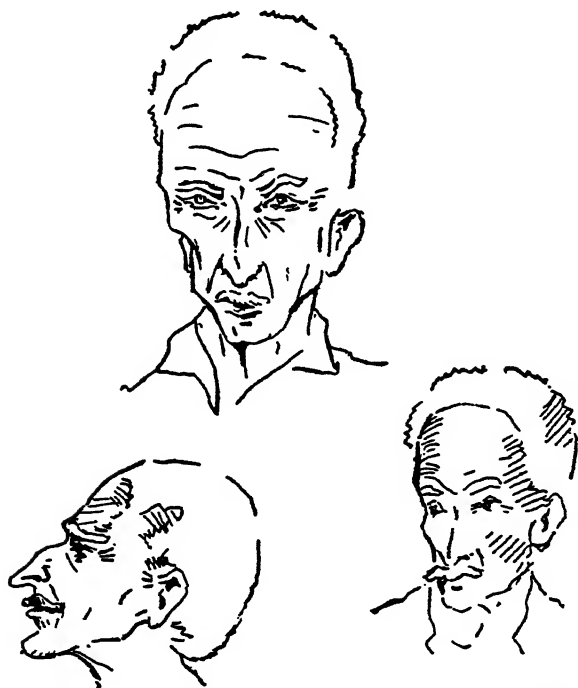
men for Human Beings,"—but that has been hard to come by, for very, very early each morning he goes out fishing alone in his canoe, remains out for hours on end; then, when he comes back and I go to his house, I am told that he is eating or sleeping, and he sleeps much, for he is a hundred years old.

In the "Small Morning"—the hours between four and six—I saw him push off from the shore. An intrepid figure, in that pale and brilliant moonlight seen immediately before sunrise and at that time alone, lean and upright, with a thatch of white hair; standing erect in the teeth of a wild gale, paddling his canoe toward the mainland.

Soon after nine o'clock he came back to sleep, but now it is "The Afternoon is Near"—the three hours between twelve and three o'clock,—and, answering the summons of his overlord, he has come to talk to me, sitting on the floor before me. An old man with an eagle-keen face, large hooked nose, the sort of profile which might belong to any old and distinguished general at home in England.

This Chief of the Fishers for Human Beings has eaten human flesh, remembers the wild and bloody rites at the temple of his tribe, when the brains of the captured were dashed out against the great stones which still support the terraces. He

assures me—this handsome, alert centenarian, so keenly smiling, bright-eyed, and courteous—that he did not like the taste of the flesh of white people,



Ratu Akuri Tudauni Mbau, the last chief of the Fishers
for Human Beings, one hundred years of age

even when most delicately cooked, with *mboro ndina*, or the true spinach, which is used only with human flesh, any more than he liked the flesh of

the people of the Carpenter Tribe, both alike being tough and tasteless.

He tells me, also, so vividly that I seem to see it, of the strangling of the widows after the death of the father of the old King Cakobau; how he saw them being led by other women along the green margin of the island between the hill and the sea, oiled and garlanded and wrapped in their finest tapa; peeping out at them from a hiding-place he had contrived for himself, so as to escape having his finger cut with an ax, as was done with all the male members of the tribes at the death of the king.

With Ratu Pope translating, he tells me, and his still strong voice singsongs out the tale like a saga, in soft rounded syllables—and in Fijian every syllable ends in a vowel—which run stream-like, gently, then with the sound of a rushing river: of the revolt of the people of Kaba; of the carrying off of the women of Mbau; of the coming of the first Tongans, with the first missionary, who offered to help them if they would become Christians; for this was in the reign of King Cakobau, during the latter part of the reign of King George of Tonga. Tells of their return with ten great canoes and of the review of the

united troops upon the reef, the island being too small for the vast number of men gathered together to spread out upon it. Tells of how the men of the Lasekau Tribe had been sent on to the reef before them, toiling slave-like by hundreds across it, to cut away all the sharp points of coral, throw aside all the poisonous fish stranded there, lest the warriors should have their feet injured,



Mbau council tree

and so be unable, not so much to march as to pursue. Tells of the favorable augury of the Ghost of the Sacred Trees of the Fishers of Human Beings, which had been given to them before they went; of their great victories and the pursuit of

their enemy with their war-cry of "*W-we . . . W-we . . . Uway—Uway-y-y-y.*"

It is our last night in Mbau, and I wander backward and forward through the village, overcome by a feeling of utter misery, weighed down by the inevitability of that fate which forces me forever to leave the thing that I most love. The preparations for a great feast are going on in the kitchen of the chief's house, overlooked by Adi Torika and her maidens, who are cooking and stuffing chickens. Just outside the kitchen there is a hole in the ground where among hot stones, covered with many layers of leaves, fish and bread-fruit and pigeons are roasting. There are altogether in the kitchen three women and a youth. When they are tired or when there is any interval in their labor, they spread mats and lie down upon the floor to rest, for no one drives any one to work in this country, and there is no pretense of being busy when one is not busy.

I have come to my room, for the feast is over, and all the ceremonies and good-bys past. This night, in our special honor, one of the most stringent rules of etiquette has been relaxed, and Adi Cakobau the princess and her sister-in-law, Ratu

Pope's wife, dined with us, sitting in a circle upon the floor; with the old Chief of the Fishermen for Human Beings and the buli, or lesser ruler, of the village a little distance away. At the end of the feast, which began with oysters, we drank healths: drank the king's health sitting, as a mark of the highest possible respect, drank the health of all we loved.

There were two lamps on the floor, but the room was large and full of shadows; the sound of wind and sea seemed almost deafening.

"And now," said Ratu Pope, "we will drink the health of Marama, the lady, Dauvolavola, the one who is always writing; drink to the health of Vavalagi, the foreigner; drink to the health of The One Who is Always Sleeping."

This with a sly glance at my companion, who has passed the entire afternoon in slumber, to which he responds, jumping to his feet with his glass in his hand:

"And to the health of Dauboge, the one who is always walking about at night, the one who is always up to some mischief or other."

"And still there are more healths to be drunk," said Ratu Pope, when the laughter which followed this sally had died away. "We will drink to the health of the son of the Marama, and to the health

of the captain of the ship who brought her here. We will, indeed, drink to the health of every one we know, of all whom we can think of without knowing."

When the feast was over there were good-bys to be said, for we were leaving at dawn next morning, and, going out into the fresh air which cleared our heads a little, we made the round of the village, sitting for a long time in Adi Cakobau's house, overcome by sadness; hung round—at once depressed and gladdened—by all the kindness and courtesy of our hostess and her guests, men in white sulus (akin to the lava-lava of the Samoans) and girls in white gowns, who sat round and sang to us.

There were so many mats on the floor that it was soft to lie upon, being high above the ground, and we lay on our sides with white pillows under our heads, smoking. Tui Rewa had brought us fire for our cigarettes, a smoldering stick of wood cut at one end to the shape of a halved triangle, of which the lower half can be laid on the ground, and the upper point lighted without fear of its setting fire to anything. Our cigarettes were of native tobacco rolled round in a thin pandanus leaf.

There was one lantern on the ground at the back of us; for the rest, the great house was in darkness, the figures of the singers, shadowy. The sound of their songs, far away and melancholy, mingled with the wind, which to-night is sweeping in like a cannonade of great guns from the sea, with tearing sheets of rain. Adi Cakobau was wearing a blouse like a man's tennis-shirt, open at the neck, and a dark skirt. From where I was lying, I could see her fine face and head edged with the light, dark against the golden-brown walls of her house.

The men and girls sang hymns, "Abide with Me" and "Lead, Kindly Light," then with a splendid sort of gusto, rolling it out, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." I and my companion gave one of the girls some money, so that kava might be drunk, and matches bought at one of the ridiculous little stores of the metropolis; and when the kava had been brewed the whole company gathered close around it, drinking it, drinking to our health.

I came back to my house soon after eleven and went to bed and to sleep. But a little after two I was awakened by the silence, for the storm had suddenly dropped. Then came a great splashing

against the sea-wall immediately beneath my window; and, when I got up and went outside, I found the moon clear and full in a sea of light, mid islands of umber clouds.

The great bull of the island, two heifers, a cow and a tiny calf were walking round this small jutting point of sea-wall to the next strip of sloping shore. The water was high and the cow and the calf walked together in front of the heifers, with the bull leading. At one spot, however, close to my house, the water was so deep, the waves so high, that the calf refused to go farther and stood pressing against the wall. Whereupon the cow mooed to the bull, attracting his attention, so that he returned, and pushing the cow aside, placing his own solid body between the waves and the youngster, coaxed the tiny creature on with delicate touches of his shining wet muzzle against its neck.

I cannot sleep and am sitting writing. With a sudden fierce slap in the face of the island, the wind has again risen; a cloud slams across the moon, and the rain is driven inland in a solid sheet. A bad outlook for to-morrow, when we have to go in a canoe and flag the little steamer which passes on its way to the north of the main island somewhere about dawn.

We have actually made the steamer. It was very cold coming out to her. There was a wild wind blowing, the sky was heavy and leaden with great clouds, the gray sea torn with white-topped



On the outrigger of a canoe

waves. But Ratu Pope had lent us his heaviest canoe and his strongest boys to paddle us. Looking back as we came away from the island, we

saw our host and his son and wife waving to us, with his sister standing farther off, in the green street of the village. My heart ached as it had never ached since I saw my own son go away from me, and I was glad that the day was gray; that the rain, which had ceased to fall in sheets as it did last night, wept solitary spots, heavy as tears.

I was very much concerned as to how I should ever get on board the steamer when I saw it come, plowing its way through the deep troughs of the sea, while we went to meet it, our own canoe like a leaf upon the water. For I am no good whatever at anything like a jump.

Luckily, the lower deck of the steamer was very low, and with hoisting from below and pulling from above I tumbled on to her. She is twenty-five tons and there are close upon two hundred passengers aboard her, crowded upon the upper and lower decks so closely that it seems as though, should one of them sneeze, the greatest number must go overboard, for it has no rail. The width of the deck round the deck-house is no more than four feet.

We go north, close in against the coast with its interminable mountains, peaked and jagged mountains showing that queer twist at the top which I have seen nowhere save in Fiji; rounded

hills, and steep cliffs as much as three hundred feet in height, hung with long creepers falling like green waterfalls in unbroken streams from top to bottom of them; and innumerable bays, the names of half of which are unknown to the captain. If any of the passengers wish to go on shore, however, he is obliged to stop the steamer and send them off in the boat which we drag behind us, while the little steamer itself—more like a stage-property vessel than anything I have ever seen before—spins and twists like a leaf in the wind. This process is repeated every half-hour or so during our passage from Mbau to Viti Levu Bay, a distance of but sixty-four miles, costing each of us thirty shillings: surely the most expensive sea-voyage per mile in the whole world, though maybe the charges are in relation to the nine hours which it takes.

When we at last reached our journey's end, Epeli Gavidi Ganilou, Roku Tui Ra and Buli of Viti Levu Bay, came down to the shore to meet us, out of sheer courtesy, as he would have come to meet any stranger, and I handed him a letter of introduction from the Colonial Secretary. He seemed, however, to think very small beer of that, looked at us proudly and distantly, but when my

companion followed it up with a note from Ratu Pope, his whole demeanor changed, and it seemed that he could not do enough for us, sending messengers to his house with our luggage, telling them to ask his wife to make ready for us.



Ratu Epeli Gavidi Ganilou
Roko Tui Ra

We are staying with Ratu Epeli now, in his house high on a terraced hill above the village, looking down on the great sweeping Viti Levu Bay with its island, and, landward at each side, on range upon range of mountains, betwixt every two peaks a paler and more distant range, and between these other ranges, swept and hung with veils of mist crossed with the continual broken arcs of rainbows. The fresh cool air is filled with the scent of honeysuckle, falling in thick wreaths from the trees around the wide smooth grass terrace in front of the house, which is more European than Ratu Pope's, with a wide veranda, a central sitting-room, and two bedrooms. In the larger room I sleep with Ratu Epeli's wife and baby, while my fellow-traveler, of much the same age as

my own son, and amazingly wise in all the ways of the Fijians,—wise and grave as only the very young can be, the most perfect companion in that he is the quietest,—shares the other bedroom with our host, with whom in the quiet of the evening we have great talks and discussions.

The Labor Government is in power in England, and Ratu Epeli, who takes a keen interest in European politics—a chief and the son of a chief of an unbroken line of chiefs, an aristocrat to his backbone—is entirely amazed that we should submit to such a thing. To his mind it seems incredible that warriors and chiefs should sink so low—or so he regards it—as to allow themselves to be dictated to by commoners.

I got up very early this morning, and walked round the garden and am now sitting in the veranda, writing. The moon is still up and it is very cold, but the wind has ceased and the bay lies like a sheet of glass beneath me.

The ground falling away from the terraces dips so sharply that there is no slope to be seen, nothing beyond the feathery tops of ironbark and coconut palms, and one large bush of coral hibiscus, its deeply serrated petals, its long streamers and tasseled pistil hung with dew. Far below

me I look down into the brown-roofed village where the fires are beginning to be lighted, thankful to think that we have made arrangements to stay here for this entire day, waiting for the horses which the one Englishman in the district, who runs a cattle ranch some fifteen miles away, is sending over to meet us.



Ratu Osea, a one-time cannibal of Viti Levu Bay

An old man, with but two teeth left in his head, has been sitting on the veranda recounting to me, in a sing-song voice, one of those interminable epics of great fights which have all the swing of pages straight out of Homer.

“For all the wars there are five sorts of men needed: first, the *Vunivalu*, or *Tui*, the Root of War, and Chief of the Ruling Tribe; secondly, the *Santuraga*, those who see to it that reverence is paid to the chiefs; thirdly, the *Bete*, or Priest—the priests being of the tribe of those who are all priests—with their long beards; fourthly, the *Matani-vanua*, or spokesmen; fifthly, the *Bati*, or Warriors. Before the people make war they must lay

their purpose before the *Bete*, meeting him if possible upon the *Nakauvadra*, or Sacred Mountain.¹

"In the war between Natauya and Nalawa, Marama, many were killed; the chief of the Naro, he also was killed; I myself saw it. The fighting swept up the hill here, swept up it like a raging sea, and many men were killed, for Ratu Pope's grandfather had sent a boat bringing rifles and powder. Also many of the Sesse were killed. Those who were captured were put in a house, and the house was burned, and they burnt with it; I myself saw it, Marama. . . ."

For a moment or so the old man broke off, puffing at his cigarette, a black ribbon of tobacco and twisted pandanus leaf, gazing out before him with fierce old eyes, re-hearing God only knows what sounds, re-seeing, re-tasting.

"The people that were burnt in the house were eaten, Marama, for it was in the bad old days, when there were cannibals." He gave me a sly sidelong glance as he said this, speaking of the bad days, though I could almost swear that the old villain licked his lips as he said it. "There was another fight later on, Marama, a small and

¹ All this is taken down on the spot, the native words written as they sounded to me; with no clue to any standardized spelling.
—*Author*.

unconsidered fight, with the people up the coast. We brought back one of them bound hand and foot, and slew him; we took off his legs and his arms and took out his entrails,—for these were in the bad days, Marama, the days before we were educated,—and filled him up with taro, and baked him in hot stones for two hours, and cut him up and ate him.”

Ratu Epeli and my friend and companion are on the veranda with me. We have a bowl of kava in front of us and other men of high caste gather round it; all together they talk of witchcraft, and the ritual of Luve-Ni-Wai, the practice of which is now forbidden, any man found practising it being punished and liable to six months in jail.

We speak in a low voice, almost whispering, not because we are afraid of being overheard, but for the reason that terror and mystery hang about the very name of Luve-Ni-Wai (“Child of Water”), a devil no more than three feet in height and yet so powerful that all alike tremble before him, even the *Dau Vakadrauni Eua*, or witch doctor, into whom Luve-Ni-Wai himself enters, and who is fated to die if he fails in the least iota to follow all the rules set out for him.

“If you wish to practise the ritual of *Luve-Ni-*

Wai, you must go into the bush, taking a *yangona* (kava) bowl and a cup made of *ai-bo* with you," said Ratu Epeli.

"That is what you must do," repeated the others, "and find the banyan tree."

"Yes, you must find the banyan tree," said Ratu Epeli; "a wide-spreading banyan tree in an open space in a wild and secret place. Then having prepared your *yangona*, you must make a litany to Luve-Ni-Wai, a *kerekere*, or request, that he will be good enough to allow two or more to be chosen to help you.

"At this, if Luve-Ni-Wai approves, he will take possession of two of your companions; if he enters into them by the feet, their feet will tremble so it is with difficulty they can keep upright on the ground, while, if he enters into their heads, their heads will tremble so that it seems as if they would shake off from their bodies; after which, Luve-Ni-Wai himself begins to speak, expounding the rules."

Up to this we have all sat perfectly silent, almost breathless, weighed down by the oppressive sense of something dreadful drawing close to us, listening to what we are saying, hanging over us with a hot fetid breath, for the wind has ceased and there is not the slightest stir among the trees,

while the almost full moon hangs right above us, ringed and distorted by some queer twist of clouds.

Ratu Epeli, as though half forgetful of what he was saying, or frightened of saying more,—sitting with his hands pressed down against his knees,—drops to silence, while the old man takes up the tale.

“Every night after this, the one who is being initiated, he with the desire, and his two companions, must take themselves to this lonely spot. During this time he must touch no woman, nor must he drink any strong drink. But once that the devil has appeared to him and spoken to him he has this power. He can take any woman and no one can know; he can go into a house or a store and steal anything he wishes, and though it is full of people no one will see him.

“If during this time,” said the old cannibal, weightily, nodding his head, “anybody cuts off his head, the Luvu-Ni-Wai will put it on again, and there will be no harm done to him.”

The talk went on from tale to tale. Ratu Epeli told me of Koro, the island where you can go up on to a high cliff and call three times to the Turtle-ghost, who will come up and answer you. “If he does not answer you at first you call into the bush,



RATU EPELI'S BOY SEATED IN A KAVA BOWL

for he may be planting, and upon that he will come down into the water where his attendants are waiting for him, with the big shark which is his guard, and, rising to the surface, listen to what you have to say to him, answering your question.

"Some say," put in the old cannibal, who seemed to act as a sort of Greek chorus to all that Ratu Epeli told us, "that at one time some men caught the Turtle-ghost and made a fire with stones in a hole in the ground and put him in there to cook him; but when they opened the fire they found nothing there but one stone. And these are the words they call to the Turtle when they wish him to come to them, '*Tui Naikasi, Ko iko ha Vie Viei, vio iko na egege.*'"

He ran on and on with the soft-syllabled Fijian words, in a sort of chant which might, indeed, have conjured the fish out of the water; so that I seemed to see them ranging up in rows, as St. Francis saw them, around the magic turtle.

CHAPTER XVII

WE have, indeed, had the most monstrous day. This morning, soon after nine o'clock, the Englishman who owns the cattle ranch, half-way between where I am now writing and Ratu Epeli's village, sent over two horses for us. It was pouring with rain, had been all night, the rain coming down in solid sheets as it can in this country where it has been known to rain just under a yard in twenty-four hours, and I can imagine nothing worse than the road—or, rather, bridle-path—through the bush, which we had to follow. In some places the soil was washed away at each side, running off in an almost perpendicular slope, leaving the road like a sharp knife-edge of soapstone, upon which it would have been impossible for the horses to keep their footing at all had they been shod. In the dips of the path, though the actual foothold was better, the water was again and again up to our saddle girths.

Some years ago I had malaria so badly that I was paralyzed down one side, and since then I have broken the leg on that side twice over.

Gaily I had planned the first twenty miles or so of our ride from Ratu Epeli's, but I had not been on a horse for more years than I can say and could never have imagined what agony the sitting astride could be; while my horse, which was a perfect wonder and as agile as a cat, had a trick of jumping every place which was at all jumpable, with a sharp jerk which pained me so that I thought I should faint.

The first part of our ride lay through flat country with myrtles and tree-ferns and crimson ginger, growing like gigantic gladioli, upon each side of us, to a height above my knee; while every tree was hung with long trails of creepers; though my companion who led the way and kept looking back at me—with the rain running down my back, soaking through my mackintosh cape, sopping the bath-towel which was, as usual, elegantly draped round my neck—assured me that the vegetation was very poor, owing to the fact that we were on the “dry side of the island”!

The Englishman, the one other white person we had seen for ten days or more, or were likely to see for another ten, lived upon the top of a hill which was like the side of a house; so steep and slippery that, as our horses plunged up through the fern and undergrowth, the only thing for it

was to leave the reins absolutely loose and fling ourselves forward upon their necks, hanging on by the saddle to keep from slipping off backward. The hillside had by no means been improved, as we heard a little later, by the fact that three hundred head of cattle had been driven down it only the day before.

It is amazing how horses are left to fend for themselves in this country. When we did at last reach the estate house the saddles and bridles were simply taken off these fine, well-bred creatures, which were left out to graze while we went in to lunch; staggering up the veranda steps, feeling like nothing on earth, absolutely drenched to the skin, the water streaming off us as though we had been dipped in a river. I hardly gave myself time to greet my host before demanding dry clothes: "Anything on earth, so long as they are dry."

Of course, there were no women's things, but he showed me into an empty room, and as I threw out my wet clothes threw me in a set of flannel pajamas. Never, never have I been so thankful for anything as for the touch of that coarse, dry flannel against my skin; though Heaven only knows what I must have looked like when, having thrown a sheet round my shoulders for the sake

of extra warmth—for it was very high up and bitterly cold—I entered the dining-room; bare-footed, for my shoes had been full of water and were in the kitchen with everything else drying.

We started off again at four o'clock that afternoon; for, though I would have given anything on earth to stay, our boys had gone on to our next stopping-place with our packs. Besides, there was only one bed, and nowhere could I see any extra blankets.

I clung to the pajama jacket, for my own jumper was still sopping wet, wearing my own skirt, which was warm though not dry, and wrapping the pajama trousers tightly round my waist under everything else, so that I might have the prospect of at least one dry garment at the end of the day's journey. Having become accustomed to some such decoration, my treasured bath-towel being perfectly hopeless, I bore off the sheet also, swearing to post it back with the rest of the things, wearing it draped over my shoulders under the mackintosh cloak which I had bought in Suva, and which leaked like a sieve.

The first part of this second lap of our journey was nothing to make any fuss about, and we were extremely gay after our good meal, a great deal of hot tea well laced with brandy, which in our

old hunting days used to be known as "brown cream." Very soon, however, the path ran into a mere swamp through which the horses plunged up to their girths in mud, so that it was with the very greatest difficulty that we could get them on at all. The darkness gathered more and more thickly, and the rain, which had ceased for a time, poured down as though a sluice had been opened in the heavens above us. The climax was reached when in almost complete darkness I saw my companion, who was riding in front of me, drop out of sight. When I myself got on a little farther, I found that his horse, half the time on its tail, was sliding down a steep bank at least sixty feet in height, and so thick with scrub that one could see no ground whatever, though a wide lead-colored streak in the darkness beneath me, the loud roar of a river in flood, told me, and no doubt about it either, what was in store for us.

I don't know that I was so much frightened as rebellious at this. We had come so far, I was so wet and cold, in such an agony of pain that I could have sobbed, at the same time actually afraid that I might faint and fall off my horse. Though all that was nothing to my indignation at the thought that my companion, hard as all young people are, could ride on ahead without so much as a word of

pity or encouragement, without so much as a glance back at me, stuck there on the top of the hill; for there was no need to draw rein, my horse being fully as terrified as I was.

"Look here, we must stop here! It's impossible to go on; I can't face it, I'm scared to death; I simply can't face it," I shrieked down after him; though all the while, despite these laments, something in me more courageous than myself compelled me to kick my heels into my horse's side, force him over the brink of the hill,—cliff, rather,—press him, slithering down, with the thorny undergrowth tearing at my legs. I reached the bottom just in time to see my companion drive his own horse into the river; get it across, drifting and struggling and swimming, somehow or other to the farther bank; then drive it up a slope every bit as steep as that down which we had come.

With death in my heart and yet with more of rage than death; furious with him, with the state of the river, most of all with the pitiless and exasperating rain, I pushed my own horse into the water; felt him lose his footing again and again underneath me, swimming a little, catching a sort of foothold upon higher ground, and swimming again, nearly beaten by the current, which ran like a wild animal against us, high above my

knees, until we at last reached the opposite shore. Leaning forward, lying flat along his neck, I caught my fingers in his mane and somehow or other drove him up such an ascent I should have thought impossible for any horse. I found my companion at the top, dismounted and with his hat off, wiping the sweat from his face, and realized in the chill twilight that he was every bit as white and sheepish as I myself.

"You might at least have looked back," I remarked bitterly, conscious that I was trembling from head to foot: upon which he turned and grinned rather shakily.

"If I had once looked back you would never have dared to come on," he said, showing an amazing knowledge of feminine nature, for one so young, an instinct for managing women which may stand him well in the years to come. The next moment he himself confessed that he had never been in such a funk in his life, and scarcely thought it was possible for us to get through. "Though," he added gravely, "we could n't have gone back, you know."

To which I agreed, for to me, of all deadly things in life, far worse than death itself, is anything in the nature of a going back.

The man with whom we had lunched had sent



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A CHIEF'S HOUSE AT MBAU, FIJI

one of his boys on with us to bring back the horses next day; and after a pause this boy also got through the river, and came struggling up the bank, trembling and shivering, trotting close at our heels as we turned, determined not to be left alone in such a spot.

Another five miles, going at the slowest possible pace,—for our horses were absolutely exhausted and there was no road or track of any sort to be seen,—and we heard in front of us the loud, incessant roar of yet another river, to which the sound of the last had been nothing more than the cry of a puling child: a roar so deafening that while we were yet about half a mile away it seemed as though we must be at the very edge of it. When we did reach the margin—for it ran flat through high marshland—we realized that here we were at last beaten. It was in wide flood, the water flecked with yellow foam, running like a mill-race, filled with the trunks of trees and broken boughs, swirling round and round in it.

It was impossible even to think of crossing upon horseback, and queerly enough my one feeling was that of an intense relief; for by this time I had reached a state of mind akin to that of Sir Roland upon first sight of his Round Tower, thankful for any sort of an end. As I slipped

from my horse and plumped down upon the swampy ground, the mere fact of being out of the saddle, of even a momentary cessation from the stab of pain in my leg, was all I asked for; though goodness knows that by this time the outlook was dark enough, dark as the fading day, for it was as impossible for us to turn back as it was for us to go on.

The moon had by now risen, appearing and disappearing between scuds of clouds, and the rain had ceased. Not that that mattered, not that anything on earth mattered, for by this time I had no inclination for life left, felt a little contemptuous of my companion and the black boy, who stood on the edge of the river, which we now knew to be the Wai-ni-buka, with their hands rounded to their mouths, endeavoring, childishly as it seemed to me, to shout down the flood, pitch their voices toward the unseen village, which the native boy declared to be Little Nausori, lying within a fold of the hill, almost immediately opposite to us.

So altogether fatalistic was my attitude of mind, indeed, that I could scarcely believe my ears when loud shouts were returned to us, and looking far up the stream we saw men pushing off in two large canoes, guiding them with their pad-

dles and allowing them to drift down to where we stood out upon a spit of land, having dully and indifferently enough taken the saddles and bridles off our horses, tethered them, and left them where



Little Nausori

they were when we saw the canoes coming. Two beautiful, well-bred, and well-trained horses whose owner must have known that this was the only way in which they could pass the night, after a long day with two complete strangers who might well have broken their knees or given them a sore back. And here, indeed, you have an epit-

ome of the most complete hospitality in the whole world, the hospitality of the horsey man willing to lend his horses.

As my companion and I crossed the river in one canoe, and the native boy, who was to take back the two horses the next morning, in the other, they spun like leaves upon the water, whirling round and round as the stream drove them, making land upon the far side close upon half a mile farther down, so that we had all that distance to scramble back through the bush. I, for my part, made my way up the steep hill to the village—and all Fijian villages are, if possible, built upon hills, to keep them clear of the flood—more or less upon my hands and knees; for the moon was already hidden behind clouds, and such a path as there was no more than a steep slide of mud. .

When we did at last reach the village we found to our surprise that it was in complete darkness, while the people who came out to stare at us, holding their lanterns high and peering into our faces, plainly had no idea who we were or whence we came.

Directly the buli came out of his house to welcome us, however, we discovered why. The note sent on by our boys from Ratu Epeli had been so sopped with rain that it was unreadable, so that

he had no idea whom the baggage belonged to, from which direction the owners of it were coming, or when they were to be expected. Not that this greatly mattered, for in any case we should have been given the best which the village afforded.

I am writing now in the village council chamber, the biggest native house I have ever seen; I have just stepped it, and make it roughly seventy feet in length. Large fires had been lighted and new mats laid down. The buli himself has carried off my companion to his own house, to change into such dry clothes as he can lay hands upon; while the buli's wife and some of the other women have helped to get me out of my dripping garments, clinging round me like an eelskin, and into an old jumper which I have found dry in the heart of my pack. I unwound the pajama trousers, still mercifully dry, from my waist, and got into them, to the surprise of the feminine community. They raised their hands and their eyes, glancing from one to another with loud clucks of astonishment: for though they have never seen a white woman here before, apart from the fourteen-year-old daughter of a doctor who once passed through here with her father,—were thrown into transports of amusement and fear when I drew off my

sopping gloves and threw them on the ground, running toward them, touching them with the very tips of their fingers or toes, running away again, clinging together, laughing and screaming,—they realized at once that my costume was not at all what it should be. They described me among themselves, with all sorts of curious conjectures, as being half a woman and half a man, christening me at once as “The One with Shells in Her Ears,” on account of the small stud pearl ear-rings which I always wear.

My traveling mate and I are sitting on the floor now beside the fire upon which fowl and yams are being cooked for our supper. Or, rather, I am sitting cross-legged with my writing-pad on my knee and he is lying upon his side smoking. At the back of us, far away in the dim distance, I have hung up my mosquito curtain over the little platform which is to serve as a bed, while my pillow is propped up in front of the fire to dry; and all our clothes are hung on strings across the room.

It is close upon ten o'clock and I am drunk with sleep; but as yet there is no prospect of supper, for the fowls here take an inordinately long time cooking,—and even then one can, in general, only

drink the broth in which they are stewed, mingling it with the yams,—while a *meke* is in progress, especially arranged in our honor.

There is one lantern on the ground at my side and the red twinkle of the fire beneath the cooking-pot. In addition to this there is the *buke* (fire) for our cigarettes, twinkling like a small red eye between us. For the rest the vast room is in darkness, though every now and then



In the *meke*
(The man is kneeling to dance)

as the fire springs up one realizes from the flash of white teeth, the turning white of an eye, that the walls are lined with people silently watch-

ing us, utterly spellbound and scarcely breathing.

Immediately in front of us and not more than four yards away a line of young girls, almost naked, wreathed with green creepers,—which hang round their bodies and are braceleted round their wrists in long streamers like ribbons,—their bodies freshly oiled and shining, are seated, swaying to and fro, moving their bodies as though dancing, with expressive Egyptian-like gestures of their hands, with the mimicry of paddling a canoe, of beckoning, of embracing, of repulsing. As they dance they turn their heads from side to side, throwing them back so that one sees no more than a line of smooth throats in the oasis of gold and umber light cast by the hurricane-lantern immediately before them; enwrapped in the rapture of a dance in which they never once rise to their feet; in which the hands and bodies, arms, neck, and head, alone are occupied. And all the time that they dance they make songs for us: songs of Russia and France,—these girls who have never been away from their own village, who have never before seen a white woman,—songs of the war and of Germany; songs of battle-ships and steamers coming and going; songs of the climbing of mountains and the swimming of rivers and the passage of rapids in canoes.

One after another starts upon a fresh theme, and the whole party of girls catch it and carry it on, tossing it as though it were a ball, from one to another, throwing it over their shoulders, their heads thrown back, to the long line of men who kneel to their dancing behind them.

The buli sits by my companion's side and talks to him; he cannot understand how we ever crossed the mountains and rivers to come so far in such weather, along such a terrible road. Above all he is overcome with what he calls my courage. He himself is a young man, thirty at most, but with the utmost gallantry—glancing sideways at me as I sit nodding over my writing-pad, looking like nothing on earth—he remarks:

“I am an old, old man, and she is but a child.”

It seems to me that the *meke* will go on and on forever. It is, indeed, a day of eternities; the ride itself was an eternity; it is more than an eternity since we left the shelter of Ratu Epeli's house; and it seems to me that now we have, indeed, reached a point at which nothing ever ends; that the fire will go on burning forever and the food cooking, the *meke* dancers swaying to and fro in dreadful monotony. An added note of inevitability is to be found in the fact that the rest of the audience, who at first gathered around the

walls, are now ringed around us, line upon line of them, lying flat upon their stomachs with their elbows on the ground, their chins cupped in their hands, perfectly immovable.

A sort of end has at last come, but only a sort. We have eaten the yams soaked in broth, and drunk all that remained over; the great house is cleared of men, and my companion has gone off to the buli's own private dwelling, while I myself am lying with half the mats on my bed pulled over me,—for the blanket in my pack is still sopping wet,—shivering with cold and trying to sleep, with but poor success. For though all the men have been turned out of the room, the women and children are still here, talking, talking, and talking and talking, as the Fijians can, and do, talk throughout the entire night. The rats rustle and squeal in the loose straw beneath my bed, and a horse crops the grass so close against my head that I can hear its heavy breathing, catch an occasional puff of warm breath through the openwork bamboo wall.

At last I can bear it all no longer, and rising in my majesty of very large borrowed pajamas, walk the length of the room toward the staring women. Demonstrating by every possible sign that is

known to me that I am longing for sleep, that it seems a good thing that they also should rest, I seem to have reduced them to, at least, temporary silence.

The night has passed: it is five o'clock. The rain has ceased; but the mountains and valleys around us, the river below us, still yellow and turbulent, are hung in a veil of light silvery mist.

This village, with its goldy-brown thatched roofs, is set upon a series of very smooth green sugar-cone-like hills. The children and grown people come and go around me, bringing in wood, carrying up water from the river, taking very little notice of me sitting on the doorstep writing. They appear to have got entirely used to me, as well they might; for throughout the entire night—after I was supposed to have settled to sleep, did, indeed, sleep in short, heavy spells—it seemed as though the whole village came and went through the great room, men and women, boys and children. I was conscious of a continual whispering, a rustling, apart from the rats; the flicker of a little taper floating upon oil, breaking through the sleep into which I sank back and back, as though drugged; while every now and then some small portion of me was picked up between

the finger and thumb by some more daring explorer, determined to find out whether I was altogether real or not—a liberty which I was too dead with sleep to resent by anything more than a grunt, a half-hearted twist aside.

CHAPTER XVIII

WE have said good-by to every one at Little Nausori, for it seemed that the entire village flocked down to the water's edge to see us off; shaking hands till my hands are so swollen that I can scarcely hold a pencil.

Now, for hours and hours, as it seems, we have been sitting in a canoe, with a deafening swirl and thunder of water in our ears, shooting innumerable rapids. To begin with, my heart was up in my throat as we rushed toward what looked like inevitable destruction against the jagged sides of great rocks; but I am now completely at my ease, realizing that the two men standing at the bow and stern of the canoe, with poles or paddles, will manage somehow or other to steer clear.

How far it is to Wainimala nobody can tell us, for "Only the white man knows that," is what they say. Not that it greatly matters so long as we get there some time to-night, or to-morrow night, or the night after. For the sun is shining;

the chill mists melting, rising in light wisps to the tops of the trees—orange-trees and myrtles, immense plumed bamboos, and innumerable, unknown forest trees, springing up from a thick undergrowth of tree-ferns and wild bananas. Although Wainimala is the nearest village where there is a buli, or anything definite in the way of accommodation certain, there are plenty of villages on each side of us, perched high on green hills down which the people run with that polite questioning, that interest in the doings of others, without which the Fijians would look upon themselves with disgust as a mannerless and uneducated people.

“*Sa lako evei? Sa lako evei?*” (“Where are you going?”) They follow up their salute with all sorts of scraps of news which seem to them, immersed in their own little world, as the news of the universe itself. In front of one village we are hung up for some time to listen to every intimate detail of the death of a man “with something bad in his stomach”; while the women washing clothes, the men bathing, the small naked boys astride logs of trees or in rickety canoes, the many more streaming in from every direction, over the hill and down the river, are all agog to see the *Valagi*.

We are a day late, but we have at last reached Wainimala, just before sunset, toiling up a steep hill to the little village, at the farther side of



Boys seine fishing on the edge of the river

which is a deep ravine filled with the tree-ferns and myrtles edged with brilliant crimson and yellow, green and spotted crotons. Around it are more cone-like little hills, each with its cluster of three

or four pale-brown houses and a few wind-twisted cocoanut trees. Beyond and below these are the river valley and mountains of every shade, the more distant a clear pale gold against the clear pale-gold sky.



The buli's house at Wailotua

We have come steadily downhill during our journey, not only actually but socially; starting with the highest chief in Fiji, going on to a lesser chief, then to the most important buli, then to a lesser buli. It is always to the buli's house that any visitors, whether expected or not, are shown. New mats are laid out, or the best the village owns in the way of mats, a fire lighted and water

and yam boiled upon the very first sight of any newcomer. We are now the guests of a man who is in reality a commoner, and, though he has not yet appeared, the difference in his house shows plainly enough the lowness of his rank.

There are a great many girls in the village, and they gather round us as we sit on a bench at the gate of the buli's house, openly wooing my companion, making eyes at him, laughing and joking; tall, finely developed girls with clean, smooth brown skins and very white teeth, wearing skirts of different colors and thin muslin bodices, very negligently open in front and in any case showing every curve.

The buli and his wife are very late coming back from the fields, where they are planting out their yams, and we have our supper, yams and tea and the remains of a tin of salmon, out upon the bench, with a nearly full moon, deep gold like an apricot, rising almost immediately above us.

It is close upon ten o'clock before our host and hostess get back. They do their best for us, but there is no spare house in the village, and so, for the first time, I have to sleep with the entire family, though they hang up a mat to screen me as much as they can from the public gaze. Bed, however, is out of the question, for the present at

least, for it seems that the buli, a rather surly peasant, having penetrated as far as Suva some months back, has returned with a sewing-machine for his wife; a machine which he must have imagined to be possessed of some gnome-like quality of doing everything that was required of it without any human aid whatever, for neither he nor any one else in the village has the faintest idea of how to work it. Half dead with sleep, I am required to lie flat on the front of myself, upon the none too clean mat, tinkering with the wretched thing by the light of one miserable lamp, half blinded with the smoke, for the buli's wife is cooking the supper for herself and her family inside the house itself—the first time I have seen such a thing done.

It has been a perfectly horrible night. There was an open doorway just opposite the end of my platformed bed. When I shut it I was almost choked by the smoke and the smell of the many people, talking and eating and drinking throughout the entire night, crowded together in the hut; leaving it open, I was chilled to death by the damp, cold mist which drifted in so that even my hair was wet and I thought I should die until the idea came to me of getting under the two upper mats

of my bed instead of lying on them. Upon getting up this morning I bitterly regretted not having taken my clothes in with me, for when I dressed, between five and six, I could have wrung the damp out of them. However, the sun is now shining, growing every moment hotter and hotter, so that I and my companion send out great puffs of steam. Our boatmen, who were gray with cold,—dulled and colorless, as all bronze men when they are not feeling well, or are depressed,—glow and darken and shine, breaking into songs.

The sun is immediately overhead, the river like molten lead, colorless and shining; all the moisture has gone out of both us and our clothes, and I feel as though I might literally crackle with dryness. We have finished all the water we brought with us and all our food save a few cold yams, morsels of which I turn round and round in my mouth, finding myself unable to swallow. It is ridiculous for any one to say that when you are really hungry you can eat anything, the fact being that you get to a stage when without fat or any form of grease you find such food as yams, so like moist wood, impossible to swallow.

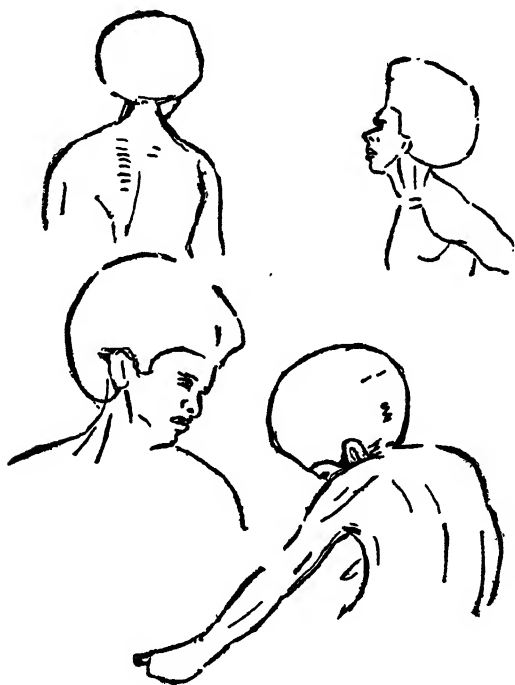
It seems now as though we have been traveling for half a lifetime. I am not unhappy, I don't

want to go back, and not for one single moment do I wish that I had n't come; but, for all that, I've reached a state where time is absolutely non-existent, and I rather wonder if other people are like that, losing all sense of time, realization of place—at least any place apart from that in which they happen to be at the moment, seeing even that through a haze—when they are really hungry or absolutely exhausted.

I am altogether myself again, for I have eaten and drunk. A couple of hours ago a twist in the river showed us a small red-brick house, with out-houses and grazing cattle, on the top of a bank a quarter of a mile or so above us.

As the ground at the edge of the river was a swamp of black mud, my companion volunteered to go up to the house and see what he could get. But he seemed to be so long gone, and I was so frantic with hunger and thirst, that I tumbled out of the canoe, plumping into the mud over the tops of my shoes, and clambering up the hill,—for the most part on my hands and knees, too completely done to battle with the achieved habits of humanity,—flung myself down upon the veranda of the strange house. I offered no explanation whatever to the owner of the place,—an elderly one-

eyed Dane who came round from the back and stood over me, stolidly staring down at me,—nothing on earth beyond a hoarse and piteous beggar's whine:



Fijians

“For the Lord’s sake give me some bread.”

For this is what it had come to after days and days without the staff of life; the very thought of

bread blocking out the sky, smothering my horizon, no other idea in my mind, no other desire in my heart.

Now we have had bread and coffee and cheese,—hard, yellow cheese, of which I have eaten what would at any other time have seemed an impossible quantity,—with lashings of fresh butter; for by some happy accident we have chanced upon a dairy farm, and are sitting waiting for a letter over which the Dane is laboring, and which he wishes to send on by us to meet the launch which we shall pick up in a few hours. Meanwhile his only companion, a half-caste Maori, one of the most completely villainous creatures I have ever seen,—just the sort of man who might have stepped right out of one of Joseph Conrad's books, and fully capable, to judge by the look of him, of murdering his white companion,—sits and brags to us, with a living stream of lies.

I am back again in the hotel at Suva. A very gay and cheerful Suva, for the fleet is in and the whole town *en fête*. This morning I've had an experience I would not have missed for anything. For all the Fijian chiefs sent out their war canoes to meet the incoming ships,—canoes so large that it takes twenty men to launch them,—and Ratu

Pope allowed me to go out in his, the greatest and leading canoe,—with George Seniloli and his chief boatmen,—the only European, apart from a couple of boys, in the whole flotilla.

These canoes have one great three-cornered sail



The canoe of a Fijian chief

made of mats, woven out of palm-leaves and sewn together. There is a mast and a swinging boom, and another boom down the farther bunt of the sail,—at least that is the only way that I can find to express it,—the junction of these two booms being held jambed against the small cross-beam on

the taffrail either at the stern or bow. When the sail is shifted, one of the boatmen,—and it must be a feat which calls for the greatest strength,—lifts it and, taking the whole weight of the sail with it, runs along the extreme edge of the canoe and drops it into the V-shaped junction of the two curved beams against the ledge of the opposite side. The canoe is balanced by an immense outrigger, formed of long slender beams running at right angles out from the canoe to what is virtually the trunk of a tree—across which we all had to hurl ourselves when the wind heeled over the canoe, bringing it down with a slap upon the water.

All these mat sails are a pale golden brown, and what the fleet of canoes must have looked like from the land I cannot say. But we were leading,—for though we started last, we very soon shot ahead,—and as I looked back at them they seemed to me like nothing more than a fleet of shining brown butterflies, driven sideways by the wind, not in the water at all, but just scudding over it, light as air.

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT a queer thing the spirit of adventure is—and for once it seems that the word “spirit” is used rightly. It is not of the soul, which is religion; though it is also a religion, the religion of those who are forever searching after the best in beauty and keenness of perception. It is not of the mind, for, though the mind evolves it, it is most often without reason; common sense has nothing whatever to do with it; gain has less than nothing to do with it. It is as unreasoning as the upward flight of the lark. It is untouched by the elements—revels in them, indeed. You cannot call it bravery, for it does not know fear. It is of the spirit—that spirit which is like a bright and shining fountain rising above the clay of the body; a flashing sword, clean from its sheath.

All this to explain why, having returned to Suva thinking that there was nothing on earth I wished for more than to remain in a comfortable hotel, within easy reach of a hot bath, to eat well-served, well-cooked meals, sleep in a comfortable

bed,—for I am subject to the delusion that I should like to try the lap of luxury before being hurtled on to Abraham's bosom,—I found after three days that there was nothing I desired less. The very desire itself was no more than the soft, overripe fruit of an immense fatigue. Thus it is that I now find myself, driven by that ruling spirit, living in the greatest possible discomfort out at Navua, for no other reason than that it is from this place alone there seems to be the faintest chance of getting to Bega, the one island in the group which I was most earnestly warned against visiting without some companion or other. Bega is only fifteen miles from Suva, and that shows what traveling in this part of the world means.

I came here upon a shockingly overcrowded little steam-launch,—for there are no roads,—having caught her by the skin of my teeth. Though she usually leaves three quarters of an hour after the scheduled time, she chose upon this occasion, for some whimsy or other, to leave a quarter of an hour earlier than she should have done; so that I only just managed to scramble on board her as she was leaving the wharf.

She was a shallowly built abomination, but for all that the water in the reef was so shallow that we continually stuck upon the coral, so that all the

passengers had to herd upon one side or the other, back into the stern or forward into the bows, to clear her; while, once she was in the open sea, the waves broke clean over her at every forward plunge.

Not for one single moment during the whole trip—which took rather over four hours—did it cease to pour with rain, so that it was impossible to remain on deck, and I was forced to languish, half suffocated, down in what was grandiloquently called “the first saloon”! It was separated from the second and third by nothing more than the back of a seat, over which a large number of the vociferously and dramatically seasick Indians, with whom it was packed, draped themselves.

I have now been three days in Navua and the rain has never, for a single moment, ceased; falling with a maddening monotony upon the iron roof of the dreary and desolate hotel in which I am staying, with such a deafening din that one has to shout at the top of one’s voice if one wants to be heard. Not that there is any one to talk to, for the immense and shapeless woman who manages it—and who at first sight I imagined must be pleasant and kind because she is so fat, though I wonder, bitterly enough, how I ever came to cher-

ish such a delusion, seeing that she has an eye like an old, ill-tempered elephant—cares nothing for anything or any one, apart from those few dazed and desiccated individuals who frequent the bar.

Navua itself stands upon a point of land sprinting out into the sea; to one side of it runs a river now in flood, and a more depressing place, indeed, could scarcely be imagined, a place of swamps and rice-fields, degenerate Indians, mosquitos, and rain. The only gleam of light in the whole district—or falling across my own mood of abysmal depression—is afforded by the nearness of a very delightful District Magistrate and his wife.

I dined with this couple last night, finding myself immensely entertained by certain items in the government of the natives, more particularly the Indians, which they recounted to me. The most engaging of all was the sentence of six months' imprisonment with hard labor for adultery, flashing through my mind, as it did, a bizarre picture of an almost deserted Bond Street; a desolate and weed-grown Leicester Square; sudden wide gaps in society where no one ever quite dared to ask where any one else might happen to be.

Day after day I have worn my soul out hoping for a passage to Bega, but there has been a strong

wind blowing in from the sea, and even if the chief did get over with his cutter—and he is the only person from whom I can expect anything—he would never be able to get back. Last evening, however, the District Magistrate, who is also Provincial Commissioner and Police Magistrate—there used to be all three of them and a doctor too, until the Fiji Government bled to death a sugar-company which had started large operations here—came up to see me. Finding me in despair, he suggested, as there was no sign of the wind abating, that I should fill in the time by going up the river to-day, starting at six o'clock in the morning, staying at a native village twenty miles away for a couple of nights, and then coming back to see what had happened here meanwhile.

All last night it rained as though the bottom had fallen out of a tank immediately above us, so that I hardly thought that the pole-men for the boat would have the courage to put in an appearance, for there is nothing that a Fijian dislikes more than getting wet; but less than an hour late, which is nothing to be accounted of here, we started off with a fierce current against us, making close upon three miles in as many hours. I myself sat in the center of the canoe, endeavoring to keep my entire person, including my feet, dry upon a kerosene

box; with an enormous umbrella with twenty ribs—which I bought at the Chinaman's store here for five rupees—open over me; while the four men, two at the bow and two at the stern, alternately poled and paddled.

When we reached the first rapids, however, we found the thick yellow water so swollen by rain, with waves as big as the sea, thick with tree trunks hurtling down or whirling round and round,—the whole face of the river being carpeted by millions upon millions of dead grasshoppers,—that my men, try as they would, were absolutely helpless, not only to make any way, but to prevent us from being driven back by the current. So we were at last reluctantly forced to turn, race downstream to Navua, reaching there close upon midday, terribly depressed.

As I streamed into the hotel I encountered the District Magistrate, who told me that the Ratu, or chief, of Bega, had actually got over, and was now lying round a turn of the river in a new cutter with an auxiliary engine. He was starting back to his island this afternoon and had been prevailed upon to take me with him, though in telling me of it the D.M. did make one proviso, and very emphatically too: that, however sick or however

frightened I might be, I should not blame him.

We start at two o'clock, and now, moderately dry, very moderately fed, I am sitting on the veranda scribbling.

It is not necessary to state that it is still raining; for that must be understood to run like a Greek chorus through the greater part of this recital.

Another day has dawned, rather to my surprise, and I am sitting, writing, upon the sea-whitened trunk of a tree washed up upon the white sands of Bega. Yesterday I wrote what I did write about the rain because it seemed impossible to believe that it could ever stop, but to-day is fine. Later on the sun may come out, for it is, as yet, scarcely five in the morning, and everything has improved—as it well may do, for yesterday, take it all in all, was about as bad a day as I have ever yet chanced upon.

The chief's cutter is very small. He is proud of its auxiliary engine, but as the engine broke down before we reached the mouth of the river, refused to come to, however much the Fijian engineer hammered at it,—and a Fijian's one idea of engineering is hammering,—it was not of much use to us; though we sailed out of the lagoon in

great style, and, taking some very bad seas, tacking a good deal, got within about three quarters of a mile of Bega at four-thirty.

It was bitterly cold, the rain icy and sleet-like. Inside the cutter the engine, stinking horribly, took up what room there was, and I myself sat by the helm on an upturned kerosene box. It is more than four months, now, since I left England, and never for more than a few days at a time have I been divorced from a kerosene box, or a bath-towel to keep the blazing sun or pelting rain off my back.

The chief is a fairly young man, handsome and finely grown, as all these Fijian chiefs are. With him there were two young men and another whom he called the captain, hideously distorted by elephantiasis. But even with these four the sail thrashed so whenever we tacked that I myself took the helm—a bar of iron so heavy that I was obliged to lash myself round, with a rope fastened to the hatch of the companionway, to keep myself from being flung overboard or swept off by the waves.

Close upon Bega the wind dropped, or was shut away from us by the mountain, so that tack and tack as we might, it seemed as though we should never make land at all. After a while the dark-

ness fell suddenly, like a black curtain; then it cleared a little, though there was no moon, and I could see no reason for it. The chief took the helm, and, lying down upon the deck, I sprawled my arms across my kerosene box, laying my head upon them, every inch of me aching from the strain of holding on and steering. The two younger men disappeared into the bowels of the cutter, and the captain, a monstrous and pathetic figure, remained stationary in the bow, silhouetted out against the pale sky, staring toward the mountainous mass of land as though by staring he could bring it nearer.

For close upon a couple of hours scarcely a breath of air came to us, and the sails hung fretting against the mast. Then the darkness fell again, so thickly that I had a feeling as though I could taste it, smell it, while a little wind arose, just sufficient to take us within a quarter of a mile of the shore. The dinghy which we had been dragging behind us was pulled up level with the cutter, so full of water that as I dropped into it in the darkness I was sure that I had dropped into the sea.

We struck the coral so far out that I had to be carried. And this was the beginning of the first panic which has seized me since I left England.

Picture it like this: I was in the arms of a chief of whom I knew nothing whatever, disembarking by night upon an island where he was absolute ruler. I was not even going into his own village where his wife and family lived, for we were unable to make it on account of the wind, but to a lonely place of which I had heard nothing but ill. Even then, as he carried me, all that I had heard of Bega flashed through my mind, the thought that there was no other single white person nearer to us than Navua, to which it was perfectly impossible to return. My return anywhere, indeed, hung upon the will and the word of the man who carried me, high up in his arms as though I had been a baby; while it was no better when he put me down upon the soft sand in the velvety blackness of that teeming-wet and moonless night, with the breathing of many people who must have seen us coming, flocked down to the shore to meet us,—were then gathered, without a word, without a single sound save that soft sibilant breath,—all around us parting as I moved, so that, however close they might be, nobody touched me.

The chief himself spoke to nobody apart from his men who came splashing on shore after us. He bade them go on to the nearest village and tell the villagers that we were coming, while he and I

went up to a little shop, which he declared to be close by us in the bush, to see if it were possible to buy any food.

When he turned and said, "Come," I followed him, stretching out one hand in front of me, just touching him to make sure of not losing him. My nerves were so on edge that I had no confidence in him, and was only more afraid of the people I had not yet seen than I was of him; I scarcely believed that there was any shop.

After a while, however, though there was no light showing, we reached a door. I knew it was a door by the chief's knocking upon it and by the variety of snores that came from behind it, lost in the blackness; by the peremptory calls to open. After a long delay a glint of light showed, the door opened, and in we went, finding ourselves in a small and very dirty hovel with an Indian man and woman and half a dozen naked children.

Here we bought hard biscuits and tinned salmon; I myself had tea and sugar in my pack. All the while I was in the place the Indian woman grinned, the children stared, while, after I had paid for what we bought, the man, catching hold of the chief's sleeve with a sidelong glance in my direction, made some facetious whispering remark which I could not catch, and could not have under-

stood if I had caught it, though the effect of it frightened me more, all strung up as I was, than anything has ever done before; for the chief giggled as he moved away, beckoning me to follow. And only those who are acquainted with the almost unvarying gravity of the artistocratic Fijians, their proud aloofness in all their dealings with white women, can realize what this giggle meant to me, though there was, of course, nothing left to do but to follow him, the very thought of a night spent with the Indian family, filthy and low-classed as they were, being out of the question.

We had borrowed the Indian's lantern, and making our way down to the shore again, we followed it, I walking behind the chief without the very slightest idea as to how far we had to go. By this time the sands, so far as I could see, were deserted, but looking down upon them in the light of the lantern I found them padded over by innumerable footprints—footsteps among which, at that moment, I would have given almost anything to discover the impress of a boot or shoe.

After what seemed a little more than a quarter of an hour we came to a village, lying on a narrow strip of land between the shore and the high cliffs, hung with creepers and loud with the trickle of innumerable small waterfalls. Here the people

flocked openly around us, leading us to the buli's house, where the three men from off the cutter were already gathered, the figure of the captain throwing grotesque shadows across the walls as he leant above the fire, poking at it, setting an iron pot of yams to boil over it.

The room was dirty, not very big, and crowded with men; littered with spades and axes and fishing-gear; the floor without mats.

It is always very difficult for me not to be smiling and friendly, often enough out of sheer nervousness. But last night, feeling very much alone, I kept my mouth set like a rat-trap and, walking past the men as though they did not exist, moved to the place of honor at the top of the room and sat down on the platform-like bed.

The chief came up to me and asked whether I wanted to change my things. When I said that I would change my shoes and stockings, which were soaking wet, he ordered one of the men of the village to give me a clean lava-lava, so that I could spread it over my knees to hide myself as I did so. He himself opened my pack and handed me clean shoes and stockings out of a calico bag—very polite and ingratiating; awed, I think, by my silence and my set face.

I sat on the bed without moving until the food

was cooked; then I moved forward into the room, and sat down upon the floor. The chief and I ate together, passing on what remained of the food to the crew and the other men; who in their turn tossed on the scraps to a couple of women who came in and out of the hut, replenishing the fire.

After we had all finished eating, the women went out of the room with the pots and pans, but the men remained. The chief came up to me, and, asking me if I wished to sleep, himself spread my mat and hung up my mosquito curtain, and told me to lie down and rest. I had often slept in a room full of people before, but I did not dare to do it there, in that strange place. Telling the chief that the room must be emptied before I would lie down, I went out and walked up and down the shore a little so as to give them time to discuss matters and finish their smokes.

The shore was absolutely deserted and so was the village; not so much as a glint of light was to be seen or the sound of a voice heard anywhere. But the rain had ceased, there was a deliciously fresh, clean wind blowing, and the moon had risen, so nothing seemed altogether so desolate as it had done.

When I went back into the hut it was evident that the chief had been talking to the men, for they

immediately rose and went out, while he himself walked round, fastening the shutters and arranging the fire so that the ashes would not blow about if a sudden gust of wind arose.

I walked to the end of the room and, sitting upon the edge of the bed, watched him for a moment or two, curiously uneasy.

When I spoke, however, saying, very decidedly, "I must have the room to myself before I can sleep, and nobody must come near me until morning," he wished me good night and went out without a word, closing the door behind him.

For a long while I lay uneasily on the hard plank bed, unable to sleep. For I am so accustomed to have every door and window open that I felt stifled, while the room was so dirty, with corners heaped with rubbish into which I dared not pry, that it smelt horrible. A skeleton of a white dog kept on getting in between the lintel and the door, licking some of the empty pots which the women had left behind them, and the rats rustled and squealed continually.

At last I could bear it all no longer, and, thinking that I could hear people whispering round the house, got up, went out. The moment I was in the fresh air, however, all my fears were gone, for I found that the sounds I had heard were noth-

ing more than the trickle of running water down the cliff behind me, the rustle of the palms, the pat of small placid waves lapping upon the shore. My nerves were so soothed that, after a quiet half-hour, sitting, half dreaming, on a heap of drift-wood, white as skeletons in the moonlight, I went back to bed and slept until close upon five o'clock this morning, forgetful of the dog, of the close air, of the chief's giggle.

It is a divine morning, so exquisitely fresh that it might be the very first that the world has ever known. As I sit upon the shore, writing, a great tree above me which the natives here call *futu* is dropping down masses of bright rose-colored stamens from a creamy white flower,—of which each petal is tipped with rose-pink,—so thickly that it lies like a velvet carpet upon the sand beneath it and mantles my shoulders with pink. At the back of me the black cliff is hung with ferns: asparagus and maidenhair, and dozens of others of which I do not know the name. The smooth golden sands are spread with fragile and beautiful shells, thick as though it were the counter of a shell shop, punctuated by the small, upright bronze figures of the native children, with their long lavender-gray shadows, who run in and



A SAMOAN GIRL



Photo. Catue Series, Suva, Fiji
FIJIAN IN MEKE DRESS

out of the sea. They come to me with what they call "eye-shells," the rounded portion of a shell precisely like the porcelain of an artificial eye.

The people out of the village come round me and talk to me. They are more primitive than any Fijians I have yet seen, but they are smiling and pleasant, and I cannot for the life of me imagine why I had such a sinister impression of them and their village last night. The chief, too, is quiet and dignified and very polite, sitting on the floor of the hut, counting out small piles of money to pay for a load of bananas which he took into Navua.

The cutter is still hung far out in the bay and, as there is not enough wind for sailing, the chief is going to take me up the coast and round the island in his long boat with six pairs of oars, directly he has finished his business.

We are at sea again. Just because we do not particularly want it, a stiff wind has risen, the sky is a clear dark blue, piled with silver-white cumulus clouds, the sun is shining. As the men bend to their oars the chief sits in the stern of the boat just behind me and tells me tales.

"There is a tree on the shore called the *fau ceva* tree; you can see it there with bent boughs and a

bent trunk, like an old, old man. If you cut a bough of that tree you will not be able to go to sea, because of the wind which will arise and last for eight days. If you want the wind to cease, all you can do is to go to the wise man of Dakuni, who will make a bow and arrow, and shoot at the wind so that it drops dead."

All the chief's stories are of the ways of the wind and the sea, and of magic which is used in the controlling of them. When he ceases telling stories he starts to sing a long-drawn monotonous song, of the ways of a boat and of the sails and the helm; of boat-building, and of battles at sea. From this he goes on to sing of me, myself, calling me by the same name as they gave me in Mbau, Dauvolavola—The One Who is always Writing. The men who are rowing the boat are not his own men, but come from Dakuibeqa. After he has told them of my writing, in a song with a chorus where they pick up the last line of every verse,—repeat it again and again in a swinging chant to which they keep time with their oars,—he starts off upon another song in which he tells them how I steered the cutter over from Navua, tying myself with a rope so that I should not be washed overboard; tells how the wind stormed and the waves

washed over and the rain fell, finding a new name for me—"The One Who is Never Afraid."

Toward the middle of the day the wind rises so that the rowers are unable to make any way against it, and we turn into a little bay, where the men carry me on shore to a village. Here we go into the buli's house, and when my pack is on shore make some tea, while the women give us fresh oranges. All the village seems busied over the making of dancing skirts out of long streamers of the fine, silvery inner bark of trees, so beaten and polished that they are as thin and shining as ribbons; dyeing them every sort of color—pink and blue and magenta and purple, yellow, brown, and russet—with vegetable dyes; hanging them across strings from tree to tree to dry.

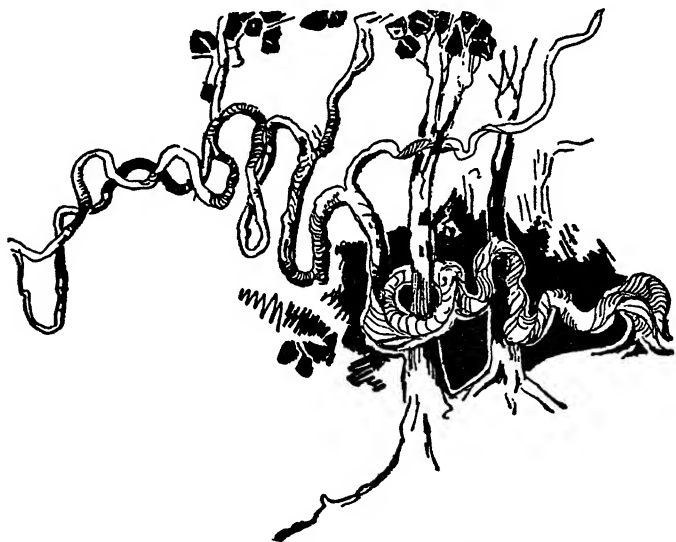
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CHAPTER XX

WE arrived at the chief's house close upon three o'clock yesterday, having taken over twenty-four hours to get here and found that his wife, having already heard that I was coming—in the way which one does hear everything in these islands—had a delicious boiled fowl and fried bananas all ready for us. The guest-house was already prepared, a large exquisitely clean room with a wooden bed on which were piles of fringed mats. The moment I finished my meal I flung myself down and slept the sleep of the just,—with every door flung wide open, the sea wind blowing clean over me, and no sort of doubt or fear in my mind,—until well into the afternoon; lulled by the sound of the sea no more than a yard away from my head. Heaven only knows how I shall ever again live or sleep in the close room of a London flat.

The chief himself prepares my meals and takes them with me while his wife waits upon us. So long as we are actually eating he sits upon a chair, but he is so manifestly uncomfortable that the mo-

ment he has finished he stretches himself out upon the floor and plays with his little boy. He is very polite to me, very punctilious about helping me first, but I wonder what he really thinks about civilized women, for even his own wife never eats



Section of a rope-tree at Bega

with him. She is a plain-looking woman, with white and very regular teeth. When I admire them he says, rather sulkily, that mine are better, and I find it difficult to stiffen gravely instead of laughing. This is his fourth wife. He tells me

in his naïf, boyish way that the other three were lazy and dirty, and no good for anything, so he sent them back home at the end of their month—which had a classic sort of sound to my mind, so long accustomed to the erratic ways of English servants.

Bega is all mountains and deep valleys, and thick and luxurious vegetation. Sitting on a bank this morning I counted what I took to be sixteen different ferns within reach of my hand. When I brought them home, however, and showed them to the chief, he laid them out upon the table and separated them into pairs, pointing out to me that nearly all of them were male and female, so that there were only six or eight different varieties, in all.

“And that is the way with everything,” he said. “There are always men and women among the trees and the flowers, the birds and the fish in the sea; no one is altogether alone.”

Last evening he took me for a walk through the village which lies in an amphitheater of hills, all alike crowned to the very top with forests; excepting for one single sugar-cone hill half a mile away, which is smooth green, like a field, with a fringe of dark trees running up one side of it and down the other.

From the village we mounted a steep hill high above to the right of it, with a wonderful view of jutting bays, and here he showed me the schools which he is building for the boys of Bega: four large native houses in which there are already forty boys and three teachers. In time, however, he intends to make room for one hundred and forty, being determined that the boys of his island shall be well educated. And yet what is education? He himself had never been to school, never learned to read, and yet he could tell me what he had about the ferns. Imagine any uneducated man at home being able to differentiate between the male and female of the same species!

We went into one of the school-houses, really a boarding-house, and sat upon the bed—one long platform running the whole length of the room, and divided into sections by the different boys' mats, with their vividly colored woolen fringes. Here there was, as in most houses, a clearing made in the coarser mats which covered the floor, and a large wood fire burning there. Some of the boys were paring and cooking a vast pot full of taro for their evening meal, while others came and went with wood and water.

At that height the air was fresh and sweet with the scent of burning wood. From where I sat the

coast with its three bays enwrapped a trefoil of smooth sea reflecting as in glass the pale daffodil sky above it; while the fire in the corner of the room was red and gold, flickering upon the dark faces of the boys, who divided their attention between their cooking and us: boys with shining bronze skins, bright dark eyes, and white teeth, wearing nothing more than the whitest of sulus.

The chief began to sing—the song of the ship-building and the sailing, the song of the fighting men in their canoes, and the song which he had made about me; while his small son of three years old who sat upon my lap beat upon my chest with his hands in time to the music, and his mother, sitting upon the floor beside him, smiled pensively.

As we toiled up the steep path to the school she had carried the child on her back; but as we walked down it he walked like a little chief by his father's side, holding his hand, while the mother followed behind us.

This island of Bega is different from all the other islands, because here the men have the gift of being able to walk over red-hot stones without being burned.

To-day the chief took me to see the immense amphitheater where the ceremony takes place. I



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A TYPICAL RIVER SCENE IN THE FIJI ISLANDS

saw the burned ground, the ashes and charred wood, the blackened stones, and the marks of fire upon the trees all around it which show how intense the heat must be on such occasions. But as it is a great performance and requires a great deal of time to get it ready it could not be done for one person alone; or, at any rate, without several days' warning, so that it is impossible for me to see it.

Whenever we are walking about the village the chief walks in front of me. If I want anything carried when we first start, he calls a man to follow with it; but if I take off my coat and carry it he waits till we are well away out of sight of every one, then he takes it from me. Very often when I am sitting sketching he will fan me with a large leaf to keep away the mosquitos and flies, but if any one passes he drops it at once, like a shy, proud school-boy, terribly embarrassed.

I keep on trying to settle when, and how, to get back to Navua; but he wants me to stay and teach him more English, threatens to cut off a bough of the *fau ceva* tree so that I shall not be able to get away. He promises me that if I stay he will take me over to the other side of the island—show me there upon the coast a great rock; a rock so sacred that if you lay your hands upon it three great

waves will come sweeping up out of the sea, one after the other, and it will be a wonder if you escape with your life.

Across many of the paths here are creepers with thick twisted stems like ropes. I persuaded the chief to attempt to measure one for me to-day; but after he had measured it to the length of sixty-two fathoms it lost itself among the other trees and he was obliged to give it up. He had not, indeed, much liked touching it at all, for it, also, is sacred, and if any man cuts it he will die within the month.

I am back again in Navua, where it is still raining. Though thank Heaven I am leaving this afternoon, having crossed over from Bega yesterday, a Sunday. And in this lay the root of all my trouble, for the Fijians do not like starting any enterprise upon that day, though it did not seem to me that the captain of the cutter had any religious scruples about going as far as he wished, which was to the second village along the coast, where he happened to have a wife.

The chief himself was not able to come over with me, and he put me in charge of this captain, the man with elephantiasis, and two younger men. From the very beginning everything went wrong.

The engine would not work and the wind was so light and fitful that it seemed as though we should never get out of the land-locked bay. Then when we did get out of it, the men kept so close into the coast that we lost what wind there was. It was useless to expostulate with them, for they knew scarcely any English and were sulky and obstinately fixed in their own way.

At the first village the cutter was run into a bay, and one of the men, going on shore, sent out a young boy in his place.

Coming over we had had the so-called captain, the chief, and two other men; now there were only three counting the boy; and though I steered I did not know enough about the coast, the opening in the reefs, to take the matter entirely into my own hands.

As the wind rose still more the youth whom we had started with, and whom we had originally brought over from Navua, went below and started tinkering with the engine; while the captain and the new boy talked together, shaking their heads and saying that it was impossible that we could ever reach Navua that night, that the winds were against us and the time wrongly chosen, plainly performing for my benefit; though it was only when we got level with the village, where we had

stayed the night we came over, that the trouble really began, for here the captain took the tiller out of my hand, and, shouting to the boy to shift the sails, ran the cutter right up into the bay.



Fijian boy spearing fish

At this I became furiously angry, going for the captain so fiercely that he went below into some mysterious little cubbyhole up in the bow and shut the hatch over himself, leaving the tiller to me.

At first I was glad enough to be rid of him. But after we had passed the Bega Passage, out of the reef, the wind got up and blew so heavily, in such fierce gusts, with blinding torrents of rain, that it seemed impossible for us to manage the sails,

and I sent first one boy and then another to tell the captain to come on deck, cursing my own trust in the Fijian character; for if I had only taken a revolver with me I could have frightened him to his post.

All this while the seas grew higher and higher, and the pull upon the tiller was such that I had to hold it with my legs flung over it at my knees, as well as my hands, lashing myself round with a rope to keep from being washed overboard. Still, for all our difficulties, short-handed as we were, we succeeded in running across to the mainland reef; had made the passage and got through it; were a good three quarters of a mile on the landward side, when the captain came up on deck and said that he would steer.

So great was my distrust of him, however, that I would not let him touch the tiller; and, turning away, he went and stood in the bow of the cutter, on the steps of the tiny hold, with his head just out of the hatch, a monstrous and sinister figure wrapped round with mist and rain.

The Navua boy, Mau, said that he must try to persuade the auxiliary motor—at which he had been hammering on and off throughout the whole passage—to go, or else we should not be able to get up the river. He disappeared below and the Bega

boy, who had never stopped grumbling about the wet and cold, followed him, leaving me alone on deck to manage the cutter which had taken four men on the voyage over. Though I shouted down the hold, furiously telling him to come up on deck again, he took no notice whatever, while the captain remained immobile in the bow.

Then, quite suddenly, things began to happen. The captain clambered up on deck and shouted to the Bega boy, who immediately came shouting up out of the cabin. For a moment or so they bellowed furiously at each other, over-shouting the wind, the thresh of canvas; then, before I knew what they were about, the captain came toward me, wrenched the tiller out of my hand, and unshipped the rudder; while the boy ran down the sail, leaving it loose and flapping with the boom, swinging so that it was with the greatest difficulty that I could keep from being swept overboard.

At this I was strung up into such a rage as I think I have never been in before. It is impossible that the men could have understood the language that I used, and, indeed, I was amazed at myself, at the sound of my voice hurtling it out; but something in the way I used it or the look of me—for I always get a dead white when I am

really angry—frightened them so that they ran forward and began to hoist the sail. Rather, they pretended to hoist it, getting it all twisted in a way that no Fijian who had not some ulterior motive of his own would ever do, for these people are the most wonderful seamen in the world.

Hanging on as best I could, I picked up the tiller, which had dropped upon the deck beside me, and was trying to fix it into its socket when, happening to glance round, I saw to my horror that we had drifted back within half a dozen yards of the reef, white with foam, overhung with thick clouds of spray.

At this I gave up all idea of steering. Crawling to the little mouth of the engine-room, I shrieked down it to the boy Mau, who ran up on deck, took the loose iron bar of the tiller out of my hand, and then,—realizing how hopeless it was, for of course we had no steering-way on us,—called to me, bellying through the wind, the roar of the waves, and the loud flapping of the sails, with his hands to his mouth, though it was no more than a yard away:

“Marama, come away with me in little boat. These men very bad men. Me row Marama.”

The dinghy trailing behind us was more than

half full of water, but, pulling her up a little, he took a running jump into her and drew her level with the cutter, which had now swung round so that she had her nose almost on the reef. I made the other boy and the captain, who by now looked thoroughly frightened, throw in my suit-case and bundle of bedding,—for I knew I could not trust them once I was out of the cutter,—then scrambled overboard as best I could, horribly hampered by my lame leg and the tossing of the little dinghy—for the sea ran like a mad mill-race through the opening in the reef, spreading out all fanways beyond it.

By this time it must have been six o'clock, and was almost dark, while the rain fell in torrents which no words can describe. The boy, Mau, said that it was only three miles to the mouth of the river, two or more up it; but, while it might have been no more, it seemed endless; seemed, indeed, after the first hour's battling with wind and tide against us, impossible that we should ever even reach the shore.

The water in the dinghy was half-way up to my knees and deadly cold. I bailed the whole time, but it was impossible to lessen it. When we did reach the river mouth we found—hearing and feeling it, for by now it was too dark to see any-

thing—that the river was running in just such a flood as it had been when I left; while the mangrove swamps and rice fields were so flooded upon each side that it was only by the rush of water that we could judge where its right course lay.

Ultimately we did, however, reach the hotel at Navua, between eight and nine o'clock; though for the last mile or so I had to keep Mau, who was nearly exhausted, going by a running series of questions and promises; my own voice, hoarse as a crow's, sounding oddly far away to myself.

When he told me that he was about to be married, I drew a vivid fancy picture of his future happy state, and the family which he would have; told him of my own son in Africa and how there were lions and elephants, and Heaven only knows what, there. The poor fellow's voice sank to a hoarse whisper over the oft-repeated words, like a sort of desperate chorus: "Me get Marama to Navua. Me get Marama there"; while he kept missing strokes so I thought that every moment he must collapse.

Never in my life have I been so glad of anything as I was when I saw the lights of that so-called hotel, inhospitable as it proved. For when I streamed up into the veranda, with the water literally sluicing off me, the few wastrels gathered

there stared at me without the slightest movement to help me with the baggage which I was pulling after me; for by this time Mau was so utterly exhausted that it was all he could do to drag himself up the river bank and through the thick belt of scrub to the hotel.

In the one sitting-room the landlady, playing cards with two of her male boarders, glanced up at me sullenly. When I asked her for food for Mau, who was my first thought, she answered, "We don't serve niggers here," and went on dealing without a second glance at me; while the two men in dirty and bedraggled white clothes, with unshaven faces and bloodshot eyes—one of them, to his shame, an English public-school boy—stared stupidly without so much as rising to their feet.

As I rapped out an order for whisky, however, the landlady hoisted herself out of her chair, slopped with bare slippered feet into the bar, measured out two tots,—of which I gave one to Mau, though it is altogether against the law,—then returned to her cards, licking her thumb as she dealt. And if Somerset Maugham could only have seen that room and that party, the dirty flaming lamp, its blackened chimney hung round with insects, the flying ants lying among their own

fallen wings upon the spotted table-cloth, the filthy cards, the derelict specimens of civilization playing at some unknown game with that shapeless woman; been deafened by the deluge which poured down unceasingly upon the tin roof, he would have realized afresh the frightful truth of his own masterpiece, "Rain."

I asked the landlady, quietly enough, if I might have something to eat. But when she grunted out sullenly that it was too late, saying, "There is no night service here," my short patience came to a sudden end and I flung round at her savagely, declaring that if she did not find something for me at once I would go off and complain to the Resident Magistrate. Then, making out some sort of acquiescence, more like a grunt than human speech, I went up into my room and changed my things, feeling that I would give anything on earth for some hot water to put my feet in, or, best of all, a hot-water bottle and bed. I pottered about miserably for a good half-hour, trying to get my hair dry, thinking that I would give the slut downstairs time to prepare something for me to eat, but when I did get down again I found her still at her cards and got nothing, in the end, beyond a plate of half-raw cold meat with pickles and some

sodden bread for my supper. And this from one white woman to another in a far-away country!

Throughout the better part of that night I lay awake, too chilled to sleep,—for my rug was sopping wet, like everything else I had taken over to Bega with me,—listening to the persistent thrash of rain upon the iron roof, the torturing drip, drip, drip where it soaked through the weak places and splashed down on the floor.

Once more I am back in the hotel in Suva, wallowing in hot baths and linen sheets, telling myself that there is nothing on earth that I could wish for. Though, even now, I am perfectly aware, at the back of my mind, that in no more than another twenty-four hours I shall be mad to be off on the trail again.

I hear from the magistrate at Navua that from all he hears that rascally captain from Bega got up his sails and raced back to his own island directly I was out of sight. As for Mau, he is enshrined forever in my memory, together with all the hospitable and courteous Fijians I have known. Goodness only knows what would have happened to me if it had not been for him, as nothing on earth would have persuaded me to give in to the captain's demands. It would have been

by no means a pleasant night at sea, with no choice between the open deck and the one tiny hold used to carry bananas, shared with that swollen parody of man.

CHAPTER XXI

I HAVE come over to Auckland on one of the New Zealand Company's boats, with the idea of going on down to Wellington, picking up a French boat there, and so over to New Caledonia. Now, however, I find that if I do go to New Caledonia I shall not only have to stay there a great deal longer than I want to, but from there shall have to go on to Fiji again. For, though boats run there from Wellington, there are no boats that run back here.

I am now waiting for a Chinese boat which I have a fancy for journeying upon up to Sydney, whence I shall be able to get on to British New Guinea; though it is all rather a waste of time, for New Zealand has been too much written about for me to tackle it, and the time is too short to get farther afield than Rotorua, where I have spent an altogether fascinated week.

Meanwhile I have been thrilled by meeting Conor O'Brien, who is on his way round the world in a twelve-ton ketch, built under his own eyes out

of Irish oak in Cork, during the time that the rebellion was going on; with every sort of wildness knocked into her by the men who were continually throwing down their tools to go and fight for the Republicans or Irish Free State; leaving the prospective owner to carry on with odd jobs as best he could; that is, when he himself was not treading upon the tail of somebody else's coat. For in those days Captain O'Brien was a fierce Republican; as he may be now, for all I know, though we had no time or thoughts for politics, gathered round the table in the saloon,—a saloon so tiny, that from any one of the settees, which run three sides of it, one may lean forward and rest one's arms upon the table,—talking, talking, talking, by the light of three candles set in heavy brass candlesticks, dimmed by a thick haze of cigarette smoke.

And what talk it was! I remember a man once saying to me, "Wine and women I love, but talk is the breath of my nostrils"; and I myself feel much the same way. There is nothing upon the whole face of the earth that I delight in so much as the sort of talk which we had then—Conor O'Brien, myself, and a man who is with him. Talk of the ways of ships with the wind, and the ways of the sea; of strange and dangerous coasts; of alarms and excursions; of the strange places we have been

in, of the queer things we have seen. Never shall I forget the picture of the two men: O'Brien, shortish, square-built, with closely cut fair beard and brilliant blue eyes; his companion, Captain West, who only joined him in Melbourne, spare and hard, with curiously light, rapidly dilating gray eyes, like gimlets for sharpness, and a gift of silence.

I am wild to get a passage on the ketch, but the difficulty is that, though the owner is quite willing to take me, accept my seamanship at a glance, he is going on to the Friendly Islands and Fiji, while I myself am bound in the opposite direction. If, as it was suggested in the course of our long discussion, we should split the difference, and he should run me up in a northeasterly direction, dropping me at New Caledonia, he would find there no wind to take him on to any place to which he is now bound, upon his homeward voyage round by the Horn; and this, as the vessel has already been out close upon a year, would be a very serious consideration.

I do not intend repeating here anything that Conor O'Brien told me of his own venture,—a venture in comparison with which mine is a mere affair of milk and water,—for he will give it to the world in a book of his own. During all the

time he and I talked together his companion had scarcely uttered a word. But last night he came up with a message for me and I persuaded him to stay to dinner, with the result that, later on, over the fire in the hotel sitting-room, which we had to ourselves, he quite suddenly began to talk; staring straight in front of him with his odd, bright light eyes, betraying no emotion of any sort, yet speaking so quickly, in such a rapid, sustained rush, that it seemed as though what he had to tell me had been bottled up until he no longer had any control over it.

Since leaving Melbourne with O'Brien he has had a bad time, having fallen on the unrailed deck of the ketch and broken his knee, which swelled to an enormous size. And only imagine what the agony must have been on such a boat, where any sort of comfort was altogether out of the question. Indeed, the pain at one time proved so intense that he lanced the knee with his knife, without improving matters. He has now but just come up to Auckland after a month in the Wellington hospital, for on account of this accident O'Brien found himself obliged to put in at New Zealand instead of going straight on to Fiji as he had intended.

However, it was not of this, all of which I had

heard before from O'Brien, that West now spoke, but of what had gone immediately before it.

Almost at the same time that O'Brien left Ireland—that is, close upon a year ago—he had started off from Newcastle, New South Wales, as a passenger in a barquentine called the *Amy Turner*, bound for Manila, where he was to join a ship as mate; having been at sea since he was fourteen and seen as much of the world, bitter and sweet,—mostly bitter to judge by the look of him,—as any man.

This *Amy Turner's* captain was also her owner, and had his wife with him. To begin with, they had a good enough voyage. When they were almost in sight of Guam, one of the Ladrone Islands north of the Carolines, however, she was caught by a typhoon—which the annals of shipping show to be one of the worst ever experienced—and for four days and nights every hand, including the passenger, was at the pumps, with very little food, no chance of getting anything hot, and no sleep.

It was the twenty-third of June when the typhoon caught the ship. On the twenty-seventh, when it was found that there was no longer any hope of combating the water in the hold and it was plain that she was sinking rapidly, nose downward, it was decided if possible to launch the boats.

This was in itself a desperate venture, with, of course, no davits of any sort and a mountainous sea running; such a sea as can be encountered nowhere and at no time save where the center of the cyclone has immediately passed, leaving behind it a demoniacal conflict. For after the center is passed, when the wind slaps round from a completely opposite direction to that from which it has before blown, the waves, still carrying with them the old impetus, pile up high, pyramid-like, in every direction.

As the men struggled with the port boat on the main deck, helped by the passenger,—and all alike near up to their necks in water,—the captain and his wife, the second mate and steward, remained upon the poop-deck; the idea being that a line could be passed from the boat round to them, so that if she was once launched they might be able to drag her along to such a position that they could either jump into her, or jump into the sea and climb into her.

As Captain West explained this to me,—or, rather, not to me at all, for he gave me the idea that things had got to such a pass with him, the lust to tell so overwhelming, that he would have gone on speaking just the same whether I was there or not, for he never so much as glanced in

my direction,—it was amazing what a sense of rush and pressure, the pressure of time shutting to with a slam like a violently banged door, the whole level recital gave me. So overwhelming, indeed, was the impression of a wild rush of events, of the hurry and horror of those last few moments, that I felt as breathless as though I myself were being torn through the whole dreadful experience: the straining, the gasping, the heart-arresting blank as the ship sank beneath my feet,—yes, actually beneath my feet,—turning over upon her side, dragging the port boat down with her; seeing the starboard boat, seeing it with my own eyes as they saw it, shoot out clear in an upright position upon the curved crest of a wave; feeling the icy water close over me as I struggled to rise, recatch my breath, with death at my heart.

“I don’t know how long we were in the water,” the shy, quiet voice continued; “it could not have been for long,—a few minutes,—for no one could have lived longer; the thrash of it was like a flail. For a moment I saw the captain’s wife—only a moment—torn as though she had been dragged through a hedge, the expression on her face, all queer and mazed-looking. The others saw more of the men, but no one saw the skipper; we spoke of that later, I and the three who got into the boat

with me,—yes, there were three, a Liverpool man, an Australian, and a Russian-Finn,—making the starboard boat, dragging ourselves into it as best we might. A job, let me tell you this. Yes, a job.

“After that, of course, there was no one to be seen. How was it possible?” His voice took on a queer note of surprise at a question which I had not so much as thought of asking. “Why, the sea was like mountains, with deep valleys between them. Nothing whatever to be seen, not so much as a glimpse of our ship, no sort of wreckage, no anything. We ourselves deafened by the roar of the waves, like thunder; blinded by the spume, the tearing sheets of rain.

“For two days and two nights it went on. For two days and two nights. Yes, that was it.”

His voice dropped at this, and he paused for a minute or two, giving so unbearable an impression of something which knew no end, of an eternity of suffering amid an unendurable tumult,—and to my mind no torture can ever be so terrible as the torture of noise,—that I cried out to him to go on, which he did; without, though, so much as turning his head in my direction, with no appearance whatever of having heard me.

“It was bitterly cold; I never felt such cold.

All four of us were wearing nothing more than our trousers, for we had stripped at the pumps. Two days and two nights, thrashed by the sea, chilled to the bone, unable for one moment to break off in our business of trying to keep the boat afloat, watching the waves. No time for anything, not so much as to see what food there might be aboard with us. And all this on the top of four days and nights at the pumps. No joke, that, eh?"

Whom he was speaking to I know not; certainly it was not to me. Rather, to the ghosts of those others who had gone down with the barquentine; rather, as though he thought that they might feel some resentment against him for not having managed to save them; was putting it to them that life was, indeed, "no joke," likely enough worse than death; speaking in so reasoning and reasonable a voice that I became shudderingly aware of others whom I could not see, there in that over-furnished, plush-bedizened hotel sitting-room, so smug and comfortable with its blazing fire. I noticed afresh with a sort of terror the curious expansion and dilation of the light-tinted eyes of the mariner.

"At one time, in spite of all we could do, she

beam-ended, and spilt the four of us out into the water. She righted herself, however, so that we were able to crawl back into her, more miserable, if that was possible—and I don't know, really I don't know. It all seemed to have reached such a dead level of misery that nothing could, any longer, be worse or better than it had been before. I suppose it was lucky, anyhow, that the gear the boat had in her was so securely fastened that nothing was spilt beyond ourselves. It was after this that we found the sea anchors, and that helped to keep her more or less steady. Not that we minded one way or another. I don't think, by that time, we any of us minded what happened; just went on fighting for life as though it was a sort of habit, with nothing to it, nothing whatever.

"On the third day the weather began to improve a little. On the fifth it was so much better that we were able to take some sort of stock of what we had with us: a few tins of meat; half a becker of water; a sextant, and a nautical almanac; mast and sail still lashed in their places.

"On the sixth day the sail was set and I took the latitude—as best I could, for I had no idea how far we had drifted since the typhoon first

struck us. Why—" his voice was patiently argumentative—"no one could have had any idea; it was all beyond us, beyond the power of man.

"What worried me," he went on in a slightly complaining tone, "was as to what seemed the best course for us to take. It was I who was responsible, you see." He said "you," but it was not in the least to me that he spoke; more likely he was explaining to the dead captain-owner what he had done with his boat and his men. "We could try to make for Saipan, which I calculated to be somewhere about three hundred and fifty miles away. On the other hand, there was Guam. Yes, Guam was nearer; but then it was dead to windward, with a very strong current setting in against it; this wiped it out and brought us down to Saipan.

"But even then we missed Saipan." West's voice was dreary and dejected, as though he could not cease to blame himself for that. "I'm sure I don't know how I did it; suppose we must have drifted beyond all calculations; it was none too easy, you see, no chronometers, no sight of the sun. Anyhow, when I realized that we had missed Saipan, I saw that this left us with the Mackenzies, eight hundred miles away, and, failing this, the Philippines, twice that distance. Not that

there seemed much chance of our reaching them unless we got rain, as we might do somewhere about the eighth parallel, for the sun had been blazing down upon us for days past, and we were getting pretty short of water, though, of course, I had set them all upon rations; they gave in to me in that; they gave in to me in everything, I had no trouble in that way. I suppose they sort of felt that I was the only one they could depend on, and kept to what I said.

“One tablespoonful of water a day; not much for tropical seas, under a tropical sun,” he went on flatly. “But there it was; there was no help for it. And when I found we had missed Saipan I put it to them that we should all go without food until we found it impossible to endure starvation any longer, and they agreed to that too. Not a bad lot, take them all in all, and by that time I had got to know them. The young Australian was a reasonable lad; one could do anything with him, that was evident enough. The Liverpool chap was a brainless mass of bone and muscle, a sort of draft animal, but he did all he could, kept quiet; I’ve nothing to say against him—against any of them, come to that. For the Russian-Finn could not help being what he was,—none of us can,—going all to pieces almost at once,

having to be cared for like a child. The poor devil was covered all over with boils; I never saw anything like it. It was bad enough for all of us, with sores which broke out from being so constantly washed with salt water, and horribly stiff with not being able to walk about, you see, but far worse for the Finn. As for me, I did not dare to think of sleep. The responsibility—that was what weighed on me.

“By this time our tongues were blackened, swollen so that we could hardly bear the feel of them in our mouths. We managed to catch a dolphin which had been following us for several days, but the meat was all salt, and we could not swallow more than a morsel or so of it.

“The nasty thing about it all was—” he spoke so calmly that there seemed nothing uncongruous about that petty word “nasty”—“there was a huge great shark started to follow us, did follow us for days, rubbing its beastly nose against the side of our boat, brushing beneath it. The men unshipped the rudder and hit at it, but it did not seem to take any notice; seemed a jolly sight surer of life than we were, and that got on our nerves. Then it came over me that I had missed the Mackenzies—how, God knows, but those small islands are none too easy to find, flat down in an

open boat. At one time we sighted a steamer, too far away to see us, still there was a sort of comfort in feeling that there were other people in the world, and ships afloat upon the sea—queer though. But then the whole set was clear; or so it seemed to us—ordinary enough in reality.”

The quiet man by my side upon the hotel sofa—a hard, twisted contortion of a sofa, despite its plush—spoke ruminatingly; adding no word as to the desperate disappointment which must have overcome the castaways when that steamer passed by on its way without seeing the one precious flare, one out of the three found in the boat, which they burned, the waving of their miserable rags upon the end of one of their two oars.

“That night it rained,” he went on, “and we were able to drink as much as we wanted. If it had come at the same time as we had killed the dolphin it would have been better, for it made us frightfully hungry, almost beyond bearing; but there you are, things never come as they might do. Anyhow, we were able to bathe our sores, and that was something. The wretched Finn went pretty well mad with delight at the touch of the water; awful to think how he must have suffered, that chap. Twenty-three days we were at it, twenty-three days and nights. By that time I

had found my reckoning, and made out that in two days we should see land. Not that I really believed we 'd see it, really believed we would ever see it again. All the same, I was right, for at the end of those two days we did actually sight a small island in the Philippines. Though even then it seemed as though we might be beaten, for there was a devil of a current setting down the coast, and by that time we none of us had strength left to use the oars.

"We hung about as best we could, however, and at sunset that same evening a little breeze sprang up from the sea and drove us into shore.

"The difficulty then was to know what to do with our boat. I tell you I could n't make out what we were to do with it; it seemed as though after everything, I was beat there," continued the narrator, in a low, hopeless tone; while nothing, I think, in all that dreadful narrative wrung me more than his account of that landing when it might have been reasonably hoped that the worst of their troubles were over.

"We knew nothing of what there was on the island; if there were people they might not be friendly; one could not be sure of water or food: there was nothing which one could be sure of, and, if we lost our boat, what might happen to us?

We could not drag it up upon the sands; how could we? We none of us had an ounce of strength left in us; and there was nothing like a stump or the fallen trunk of a tree on the shore. At last it came to me that we might tie the painter to a stone, though when we found one big enough—which in general I could have lifted perfectly well for myself—it took the four of us what seemed like hours to roll it down a few yards of sand. We were done at the end of it.

“There were no houses or people within sight. But we dragged our way a little into the bush at the back of the beach, and found a deserted palm-leaf hut, that seemed to us like the Ritz, the Carlton, and Piccadilly all rolled into one—” that’s what he said, “the Ritz, the Carlton, and Piccadilly all rolled into one,” of this wretched, deserted native dwelling!—“and there we threw ourselves down, slept like the dead until sunrise, while no one knows what the feel of the soft sand was like to us after that boat.

“As it grew light we roused ourselves, feeling stronger. The Australian boy, poking about in the corners of the hut, came across an old cooking-pot with some rice still in the bottom of it. We found water, too, just at the back of it. All this while we had kept the last of the tins of meat

unopened; and now, with one of our flares, we lit a fire and cooked the first hot meal we had tasted since the day the typhoon struck us.

"And that was the end of our troubles, or pretty near the end,—not that they sound much when one comes to talk about them,—for some natives on some of the other islands, seeing the smoke of our fire, came off in their canoes and took us in charge; nursed and fed and looked after us as though we were kids. But that's the way with most natives,—what people call savages,—so long as there's not been too many white men about to spoil them. It was they who got us up to Manila, where I picked up a boat running down to Melbourne.

"They gave me some sort of a reception—ovation, whatever you call it—in Melbourne," he added, in a shy whisper. Then turned and looking at me with a sort of astonishment as if surprised to see me there—though later on, before he left, he held my hand and gazing at me very earnestly thanked me for having listened to him; added that it made "all the difference." "Presented me with an address and a gold watch, they did—a queer sort of present for a man with no money and nothing more than one suit of cast-off white things, picked up in Manila, to his name.

But, there, I suppose they meant it kindly. They made fuss enough of me, but I was glad to fall in with O'Brien, to get off to sea again."

"To get off to sea again," with the memory of all those dreadful days still fresh upon him, his flesh scarred with sun and salt! But there, indeed, spoke the true sailor. Why, I myself remember having been at sea from the middle of February to the end of June without a sight of land; going on shore the first day in Adelaide, driving up Mount Lofty with the captain of the barque I was traveling on, and sickening for a sight of the sea; exclaiming with delight, as we caught sight of it, shining far away among the trees below us, during our homeward journey:

"There's the sea! Why, there's the sea," as though it were altogether strange.

And how the captain added:

"A sight for sore eyes, ain't it?"

CHAPTER XXII

I AM writing on board the Chinese steamer the *Ling Nam*, an adventuress, if ever there was one, with all the hard, brazen look of her kind. At the present time she is owned by the Chung Wha Navigation Company, running from Chili to Hongkong, touching at Tahiti, New Zealand, and Australia, flying the striped and many-colored flag of the Chinese Republic,—red for China, yellow for Manchuria, blue for Mongolia, white for the Mohammedans, and black for Thibet,—but just before the war she was the German passenger-ship, *Field Marshal*, plying between Hamburg and East Africa.

At one time the German crown-prince sailed in the *Ling Nam*, and she still bears his impress in the most appalling decorations, mostly marble and tiles, like an underground railway station. The cabin he occupied is unchanged, all lined with glazed tiles of the most virulent blue imaginable; the ceiling literally peppered over with unshaded electric bulbs; the whole thing, down to the bed, so entirely characteristic that one can almost see

the hope of the Hohenzollerns lying there, sleeping with the light full upon his face, his mouth open, his chin running back in acute perspective from under it.

Soon after war was declared a hole was ripped through the side of the *Field Marshal* by an English shell, which shattered one of the marble panels on the stairway, and she passed into our hands; was sold to an Australian company and carried troops home to England.

They call her a passenger-ship now, but never was anything more unlike the ordinary passenger-ship. She has all the liberties of a cargo-boat, and something else, altogether intriguing, a queer sense of unreality; though what it comes from I cannot say; perhaps from the emptiness of the vast decks, which—though I know there are at least three hundred third-class Chinese passengers on board her, a number of first-class, and, in fact, five classes in all—have up to now been so completely empty that one wandered over them as one wanders over a vast and empty house, feeling that the supposed tenants could be nothing more than the ghosts of the men who have died there.

And how many of these ghosts there might well be! For the *Ling Nam* is mainly occupied in carrying back to China men who have spent the

greater part of their lives in South America, with but one desire left: to return to their own country and lay their bones there. These people the shipping company has undertaken to repatriot, either alive or dead; the fact being that many of them have been so engrossed in money-making, or felt themselves so young, that they have put off returning until too late and there are continual deaths throughout the voyage.

We carry no doctor with us, and when an old man dies—no one troubles about returning the old women—the first mate and one of the engineers embalm him between them; a ghastly performance which I have seen taking place to-day, out in the open upon the poop-deck, with thousands upon thousands of sea-birds wheeling and screaming overhead, collected together in this vulture-like fashion by Heaven only knows what instinct; swooping down with loud screaming cries upon any choice fragment which is thrown overboard. And it strikes me that a great deal less of the defunct Chinaman than his relations can be aware of ever reaches China.

Throughout five days at sea the weather has been bad, with continual rain and wind. To-day, however, we have had a little sunshine: pale and

fitful gleams which drew the passengers up from their lairs, looking like curiously bedraggled crows; sitting about upon the deck, blinking and smiling. All the decks are now crowded. There are none of the women from the first class to be seen,—they, indeed, will remain immured below until the very end of the journey,—but among the lesser classes there are many women and children. Never in my life have I heard such incessant talking, running on and on without ceasing,—like nothing so much on earth as the sound of water being violently poured out of a great many bottles, the shaking of innumerable crow-scarers,—such laughing and tittering, the men laughing like women. Nothing less like the taciturn, dark brooders over deep and guilty secrets, such as fiction writers love, could be well imagined than these Chinese turning themselves round in the sparse sunlight, wrinkling up their queer parchment faces with delight, while the women, odd little images in black trousers and short coats, of a shining stuff which looks like mackintosh, scuttle round after the children, squealing with laughter.

I see next to nothing of the white passengers. The men, having discarded their collars and ties,—not for coolness, for the wind is icy, but rather, it seems, from an ingrained habit,—spend their

time playing bridge or poker, or lying back upon the settees with their feet upon the tables. Which will, I think, show them as they are, as well as any more elaborate word-picture. The two white women whom I know to be on board are apparently overcome by sea-sickness.

All this morning I spent up on the fo'c'sle head in a state of splendid isolation, drenched with sharp scuds of spray from the immense swathes of foam, and marbled ice-green water which parted before us, sweeping out triumphantly on each side. Launched as I was clear above the water, I felt as though I had a horse, with a vast, sweeping, and immensely buoyant gallop, beneath me; while the ship itself lost, for the first time, that queer demimondaine aspect which she in general wears.

For the most part, however, I have spent my time since I came on board talking to Mr. Wu Shen-kun,—as unlike the Mr. Wu of the drama as the real is forever unlike the purely imaginary,—who seems to have fitted as many activities as possible into his short life, and now, hopelessly paralyzed, sits all day, smiling, at the door of his cabin, hung round with every intelligent man on the boat, for he has the keenest mind, the most engaging personality that it is possible to imagine.

For two years Mr. Wu was at the London University and the School of Economics, this period being broken by a distinguished interval as one of the members of the Chinese delegation at the Washington Conference upon disarmament and followed by his appointment as secretary to the Chinese Legation in Chili. During the time that he was in Washington, and again in London, he tells me,—though it is difficult to get anything out of him about himself,—he was troubled with constant dragging pains in his limbs which the doctors then thought to be the result of the climate. When he got down to Chili, however, he was told by two different specialists that these pains were connected with his spine, and that he must undergo an operation, which he did, with the result that he is now a cripple for life,—and still well under thirty years of age,—on his way back to his own quiet home in the Province of Hunan, or South Lake, in central China; with no prospects save to be tied to his bed or chair for the remainder of his life, among people whose whole outlook upon life is that of the most remote Middle Ages.

Not that he makes a grievance of his own fate, or of anything else; and that is part of the charm he carries with him, imparts to others,—an indomitable and unwordy philosophy,—tapping his

closely cropped little round head and saying, "After all, it is what is in there, and how it got there, and who put it there, and what I myself am going to do with it, which is all that really concerns me." He greatly surprises me,—surprises me because one has such strange preconceived notions about the Chinese,—by saying that he considers that the young men at Oxford and Cambridge and the boys at English schools learn much more than the young men and the boys in China, for the simple reason that they are so much more serious; though, every day that I am on board among these childish, laughing, chattering, and hysterical people, I realize how true this may be.

There are three young Chinese doctors on board, students and business men, and the talk is well worth hearing: talk of things which happened four thousand years ago,—for these people seem to have a faculty for completely disregarding time,—tales of the time of the Emperor Shun, whose two wives wept themselves to death when he died, their tears falling upon the young bamboo above his grave, the Hsian bamboo which remains spotted to this day from the scalding drops which fell upon it; tales of Tso-lu, the oldest town in China, founded by the Emperor Hwan, who had gained his dominion by killing Chi-yu, who in his

fighting made smoke screens, apparently much the same as those used in the last war, to protect his men. Hwan himself invented the compass in the shape of a little man, whose finger always pointed to the south, seated in a tiny carriage.

We are nearing Sydney, where I hope to pick up a boat for Papua; but I shall hate to leave Mr. Wu and his friends with whom I have spent enchanted hours in never-ending discussion of philosophies and religions, speculations as to the future, talks of the past. Of all they have told me, there is nothing attracts me more than their description of Taoism, so that if ever I can come to form any definite faith I think I shall be a Taoist; for with three souls and seven subconsciousnesses, and ten ruling influences, how could one ever feel lonely?

Of all these souls and subconsciousnesses and influences the three souls alone proceed, in after life, to heaven, the seven subconsciousnesses accompanying the body into the grave; while, if there be any man so wicked that he deserves to die, a holy Taoist can accomplish his death by the simple process of drawing away from him his three souls and his seven subconsciousnesses—or spirits, as they often call them, puzzling me until

I find how sharply they differentiate between the soul and the spirit.

The doctors talked continually and gravely of their profession. The one whose words they most hung upon, however, spoke—apart from his own language—only Spanish, and thus I missed a great deal which I should have liked to hear; though there were certain things, like their cure for meningitis, which were explained to me, interesting me immensely. It seems that the Chinese doctors have a horror of our method of treating it with ice and cold-water bandages, which they declare increases the mischief by hardening the arteries. They themselves use everything that is possible to make the patient perspire, immersing him in an atmosphere of steam. This is very curious, for the native Tahitians also treat this disease with heat, placing the two rinds of a divided fresh, soft cocoanut round a child's head after immersing the nut in boiling water; binding it about with many layers of leaves to keep the heat in. The Chinese, like many native people, treat blood-pressure by enriching the blood as much as possible, so that it may flow more quickly.

The captain of the *Ling Nam* is quite young,—very young indeed to be a captain,—tall and spare, handsome in a sort of dashing way. He moves

quickly, often runs, talks incessantly, talks of himself without ceasing; cannot cross the deck without seeming to make a procession of one. Always, always, we are in a position of terrible danger from which he alone can save us. Either the ship will sink or be dashed to pieces on a rock or captured by an uprising among the third-, fourth-, and fifth-class passengers. They do, indeed, grow increasingly restless, surging up on to the first deck, querulous and loud-voiced, all their infantile smiles a thing of the past,—though I suspect that they are merely hungry and in need of a square meal, supposing that the bill of fare drops through that second, third, fourth, and fifth, below what is really inadequate to the first,—while the captain confronts them with a pistol in each hand, his long legs wide apart like an animated compass, his hair streaming in the wind.

This evening he rushed into the saloon where the European passengers were playing bridge, and screamed into the ear of the most elderly and nervous of them that we were now in the Tasman Sea, the most dangerous part of the whole voyage, and it would be a wonder if we got through. The first night out, going through the narrows after leaving Auckland, he dragged me up on the bridge in a thick darkness which could be felt, to im-

press me with a purely fictitious account of how the compasses had all gone wrong, how he himself would not dare to leave the bridge for a single moment—having but just left it for no other reason than to see how easily I could be frightened. And never, never, throughout the entire voyage, has he allowed us for one single moment to forget that we are at the mercy of the most mutinous crew, including the officers, the most bloodthirsty steerage passengers upon the most unstable ship in the most dangerous waters in the world; foretelling southerly busters and cyclones from which we may deem ourselves fortunate to escape alive, with sincere thanks to the Almighty for having created the one man in the entire world capable of saving us.

Sydney, after fifteen years; an immeasurably elongated Sydney, running from bay to bay, from inlet to inlet, round one promontory after another, in a wide ribbon of red-tiled roofs, threaded in among masses of green trees, as beautiful a modern city, in as beautiful a setting, as can well be imagined; and yet bringing with it, to me at least, that exhausted and mazed feeling, that sense of being nothing more than a mere pinch of friable dust, to which conventional civilizations and great

cities always reduce me. And in this state I shall remain until I can, by some means or other, gather enough money to move on to yet other islands, embrace afresh all that they mean to me of delight and enchantment: an altogether apart world of flesh-white sands and blazing sea; palm-trees, schooners, ketches: pearlers, planters, and sea-captains; of aspirations, failures, relinquishments, and dreams which broke one's heart while one was among them and drag now at the strings of it with an almost intolerable nostalgia; of a bronze-skinned people who are innocent as we can never now be, guilty as we have never yet been; people with their own ideals, their own traditions, so entirely different from ours that we touch a new heaven and a new hell in realizing them, a grown-upness which we have before never known and a childishness which eludes our grasp.

All this and more; the very atmosphere of the little islands of the South Seas: a sun which bakes to the bone, and an air like a caress; a glow and wonder in the sky, and upon the sea and upon the mountaintops; color which runs itself in upon our mind like a gleaming flood of jeweler's enamel, color piled upon every wharf, spilling down upon every sandy shore where one makes landfall.

Wharfs and landing-stages like rainbow gar-

dens with girls—girls with silk and muslin dresses of every light and delicate and vivid tint flounced to the waist as in Tahiti; waving, flowing hair, and flowers—challenges to love—behind each ear. Brilliant green and golden oranges and mangoes and pomegranates. The flare of scarlet flamboyant trees and purple Bougainvillea hanging in mantles from the banyan trees which fringe the bays, backed with their mountains, their blue and lavender peaks.

The dropping of the anchor outside new islands,—islands and islands and islands, no two ever alike,—ever-changing languages and ever-changing peoples; all in the little, small as a jewel, so that it seems as though one were able to take it up in the hollows of one's two hands, feel the warmth of it, turning it, catching the glow upon it as upon a jewel.

That, for me, is life.

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